


Lectures on Gandhism

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE





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BY
NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD-14

First Edition, 2,000 Copies, November 1971

Four Rupees

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Printed and Published by Shantilal Harjivan Shah,
Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad-14

PREFACE

In course of the last five years, I have had the opportunity of lecturing at several Universities and other institutions on various aspects of Gandhism. The lectures at the Jadavpur University have been published as *Gandhi: The Man and His Mission* (Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Bombay, 1966); those at Ravindrabharati University by the University itself in Bengali, as *Gandhi-Manas* (1967); at Bombay as *Gandhi in Indian Politics*, where the sponsors were the Congress for Cultural Freedom (Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1967). The Gandhi Memorial Lectures at the Gauhati University were likewise published by the University itself under the title of *Gandhi and Modern India* (1970).

Besides these, there were some more, including those at the Universities of Poona or Delhi; and it was very kind of the Navajivan Trust to offer to publish them in the form of the present book. I am deeply grateful to Shri Shantilal H. Shah for his interest and help in connexion with the publication. The authorities of various institutions also very kindly gave me the permission to reproduce the lectures in their present form; and my thanks are equally due to them.

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

7 October 1971,
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Calcutta-3

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LECTURES ON GANDHISM

PHILOSOPHY OF GANDHIJI*

There was one distinctive character about Gandhiji's concept of religion. During his after-prayer speech every evening, Gandhiji used to deal with political, economic, social problems as well as questions about man's relationship with God. In his mind, he did not divide human life into water-tight compartments. He felt that a true man of religion could not put up with injustice anywhere, whether in the social, economic or political field. A man could not also live completely isolated from the rest of his neighbours. He had a responsibility in respect of his own life, as much as the life and sufferings of those by whom he was surrounded. The removal of injustice in every sphere, therefore, became a part of his own religious duties.

Personally, Gandhiji drew no distinction between men of different faiths and those who differed from one another either in the colour of their skin or in regard to their citizenship of different Nation States. For him, there was only one human family; and he believed that a truly religious man was to re-establish this feeling of human unity wherever it had become disturbed.

Thus, Gandhiji's entire conception of religion was of an integrated kind. Change in one sphere was bound to affect other spheres of life. Thus, if economic wrongs were set right, it would not only morally uplift the individual who tried to establish justice, but also the whole of society, whose institutions will also have to be completely revolutionized in order to fall in line with the new moral values.

What about spirituality? Can a person not pursue his spiritual life in isolation? Gandhiji's own feeling in this

*Summary of the speech delivered on 17 March 1969 at a seminar organized by the Dept. of Philosophy, University of Delhi.

respect was rather original. He felt that spiritual upliftment is something like the fragrance of a flower. The gardener can only tend his garden, choose proper seeds or saplings, and take all care of them that he can; and if his efforts are right, the fragrance would appear of its own in the flower. In the same manner, if a man lives rightly in his social life, trying to remove injustices, and through a constant effort of re-affirming the brotherhood of man—if he makes this his sole concern—then, in course of time, his inner spiritual life will also bear a fragrance like that of a beautiful flower which grows in a well-kept garden.

What about his conception of God? Gandhiji was a firm Hindu in one respect. He felt that every man has to live to the best of his ability in accordance with the highest value to which he subscribes. The vision of truth, or the ideals by means of which every individual guides his life, are always fragments or partial views of truth. Therefore, like a democrat he believed that every man should live in terms of his own partial view of truth. But he should never stop on the way. The more one lives rightly, the more does one's view of truth also expand. And, therefore, he said that if a man had the feeling of expansion, then he was on the right track; but if he had a feeling of contraction, then he was on the wrong track; a path which would ultimately lead him backwards to death.

Even from an atheist, his demand was that the atheist must live in terms of the truth as he saw it, and must also be prepared to suffer for his truth. At the same time, he must guarantee the same right to everybody else also to live according to their own light. But in life one may come across a situation where one has to oppose the views of others; and Gandhiji's idea was that, if this resistance was in terms of non-violence, then one could proceed. Violence was wrong, because through violence one tries to impose one's view of truth upon another by means of punishment, while through non-violence one tries to convert someone else to one's own point of view. In course of

such an endeavour, one also constantly re-examines one's own position, changes it where necessary, and even accepts whatever seems to be right in the viewpoint of one whom he opposes. Violence leads to the suppression of one world-view by another, not through moral means. In contrast, non-violence leads to the re-definition of a new world-view to which both the contestants may have served to build up as joint contributors.

Non-violence is, therefore, the only way of safeguarding democracy.

We now come to another aspect of Gandhiji's philosophy. Tolstoy believed very firmly that if every single human being tries to live in accordance with what his conscience dictates to him and refuses to listen to the suggestion which governments or various social institutions try to impose upon him, then freedom and morality will be truly established in the world. All the institutions which are built upon error will vanish before the light which is shed even by one true life. Gandhiji, however, did not quite depend as much upon an individual's effort as Tolstoy did. The individual's reform of life was undoubtedly important; but Gandhiji thought that, taking men as they are, they should combine in large numbers, think clearly as to what their moral demands are, and then resist the institutions based upon injustice through massive non-violent non-co-operation. He did not want to leave the institutions to wither away, as Tolstoy apparently did. Gandhiji's action began not at the individual end, but at the social end, i.e. the collective and institutional end.

But he also knew that all individuals, who might temporarily subscribe to a moral cause, may not have the strength to bear the burden of sufferings which might come upon them as a result of non-violent non-co-operation. Like a good General, he designed progressive stages through which the masses could slowly and continuously progress from resistance to resistance. At the same time, he advised those who engaged in satyagraha to spend a larger part of

their time in trying to build up the image of an exploitation-free society in their immediate surroundings through intelligently designed constructive work. It was only if they did so that they could qualify for non-violent non-co-operation.

Gandhiji certainly also believed that this massive or collective effort of opposing institutions of injustice, and establishing institutions in their place which were based upon justice, would not merely bring about change in the structure of society, but it would also deeply affect the inner being of the persons engaged in this noble enterprise. Men will have to attend to both ends, perfecting themselves and perfecting society. The measure of perfection attained by them will be registered by the changed structure of social institutions as well as by corresponding changes in their inner life.

There is one point which perhaps needs to be emphasized in the end. As far as I have understood the Marxian point of view, it places more reliance upon institutional changes than on changes in the life of the individual regarded separately. It seems to me that Marxists believe that once institutions are changed in the right direction, and justice is assured, men will fall in line with it and become better men. If there are some who cannot keep pace with the changing institutions, they will be weeded out either automatically or by intention.

This is a point where Gandhiji was very much at variance with Marxists in regard to the importance which each gives to the individual and to society or its institutions. To Gandhiji, both are important; to the Marxists, the structure of society seems to be more important than the individual. Consequently, the latter do not hesitate to condemn those who cannot easily tread the path of justice, while Gandhiji, with infinite patience, did not condemn them, but courageously tried to convert them to the conditions of a better life.

GANDHIJI ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEMOCRACY*

What kind of society did Gandhiji want to build up in India? This is the question to which we have to address ourselves tonight. Gandhiji subscribed to the belief that all humankind was one single family; and any action or institution which militated against this, was immoral. Exploitation or inequality in any shape or form was a denial of this unity. A truly moral man had therefore to resist injustice wherever it existed, and re-establish the oneness and the brotherhood of all men, by means which were also equally without blemish.

In regard to economics, Gandhiji held with Ruskin that the wages of all socially useful forms of labour should be equal. The barber and the lawyer should be paid equal wages, because their physical needs were more or less the same. If the poet had talent, or the scientist loved to dedicate himself to the pursuit of his science, he must pursue his vocation for its own pleasure, and not barter it for his living wage.

Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra had to utilize their special talents for the service of the human family, and treat their talents as something precious which they held as trustees. But for their daily keep, they must earn it by the sweat of their brow. Gandhiji took this command of the Bible in a completely literal sense.

It was asked of him once, if he would recommend the duty of 'bread labour' to a poet like Tagore, or to a scientist like Jagadish Chandra Bose. His reply was that, if the Poet identified himself with the rest of his fellow-men thus *through labour*, even the quality of his writings

*Speech at seminar in Lajpat Bhavan on 28 March 1969 organized by A. I. Panchayat Parishad and Gandhi Centenary Committee.

would improve. In this respect, Gandhiji came close to Tolstoy and to Kropotkin. But when someone said that the Poet might not feel inclined to do this work, he said that, in that case, society would support him, just as in ancient times Brahmins were also supported by the householder through the institution of gifts. In his opinion, a Brahmin who deserved such support was one 'who possesses nothing and whose business it is to spread holy learning'. But, barring a few exceptional cases of this kind, he was not prepared to relax the rule of bread labour for everyone who merely claimed such relaxation.

In one respect, therefore, Gandhiji subscribed to the Law of *Varna*, as he understood it. But it should be clear that he gave his own meaning to it; and this meaning differed widely from that held by scholars of orthodox persuasion. For him, the *status* of all was to be the same; and all were subject to a common law of labour; and thus he tried to bring about equality in human society by converting all men voluntarily into Shudras.

Two extracts from his writings will illustrate clearly what he meant.

I want to bring about an equalization of status. The working classes have all these centuries been isolated and relegated to a lower status. They have been *Shoodras*, and the word has been interpreted to mean an inferior status. I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a schoolmaster. (*Selections from Gandhi*, 1968, p. 40)

(Gandhiji) had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis* (scavengers), doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land. (*Ibid.*, p. 81)

It will thus be observed that although Gandhiji used ancient terms like *Varna* or Brahmin and Shudra, yet the meaning which he gave to these words was very much his own. He claimed to be a Sanatani Hindu; but, at the same time, he held that the moral experiences of mankind, the demand for social justice which had become a part of modern man's common heritage, had to be woven into the texture of what we had inherited from the past. Indeed, he tried to find a meaning for verses in the *Bhagavad Gita* in terms of humanity's new experiences.

Thus Gandhiji once wrote:

The law that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on bread labour. But even before that I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The divine law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a Russian writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertized it, and gave it wider publicity. In my view, the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the *Gita*, where we are told, that he who eats without offering sacrifice, eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean bread labour. (*Ibid.*, pp. 50-51)

Thus he was a Sanatani Hindu, as he claimed to be, but he was something more.

I would reject all authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. Authority sustains and ennobles the weak when it is the handiwork of reason, but it degrades them when it supplants reason sanctified by the still small voice within. (*Ibid.*, p. 260)

What were then his views about institutionalized religion? Like a good Hindu that he was, Gandhiji firmly held the belief that truth appeared to every man in no more than small fragments only. And each man had to order his life by the little lamp of truth which burned within. But the question is, cannot these separate and fragmentary

views of truth come into conflict with one another? The rich man may think one way, the poor man another. How should we then compose these differences?

Gandhiji's answer was that each man owed it to himself to live in accordance with what he held to be right and true. But if he accepted the Hindu view that truth appears in fragments only, then he had the right to oppose other views of truth, but do so only through non-violence. He could not impose or inflict his own view of truth upon those who differed from him by means of punishment, i.e. by means of violence. But he had every right to oppose in a civil manner, by means of satyagraha, the purpose of which is to convert and not coerce. No man could be a silent witness to any wrong, and yet claim to pursue his own religious path in sequestered solitariness. And if a man pursued the highest dictates of his conscience, and at the same time refused to oppose other views of truth by violence, but opposed them by non-violence alone, then this non-violence became the greatest guarantee for the establishment of true democracy. Thus he wrote:

The golden rule of conduct, therefore, is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we shall see *Truth* in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody's freedom of conscience. (*Ibid.*, p. 19)

Religion and morality were thus intimately intertwined in Gandhiji's philosophy. Moreover, religion was an intensely personal affair which should have nothing to do with either political or social identification. So much so, that, during the later stages of his journey through riot-torn Noakhali, he said in course of one of his after-prayer speeches that different castes and men and women of different faiths could marry with one another, as their

religious faiths were personal, and should have no relation to their social relations.

This was not, however, an opinion which he held in early times. But Gandhiji never ceased to grow; and even in the last years of his life, this growth remained uninterrupted.

With regard to organized religion, Gandhiji held that every religion contained a core of truth which was permanent, while it was also encrusted by experiences which arose out of narrow local needs, and even by some of the weaknesses of the men who professed it.

In a meeting of Christian missionaries someone once asked him, what his advice was to the Christians of India. Without a moment's hesitation, the reply came that they should strive to be better Christians. Indeed he held that:

If a man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of the other too. (*Ibid.*, p. 256)

He said again:

Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals. (*Ibid.*, p. 256)

In this respect, Gandhiji was again a Hindu to the core of his essential beliefs. For the *Gita* has also described how the faiths of men, if they are dynamic and sincere, are like rivers which eventually wend their way to the ocean; and when they reach it, all of them lose their separate identity.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SATYAGRAHA*

I. WHAT IS SATYAGRAHA?

GANDHIJI, THE PRACTICAL IDEALIST

There is a significant difference between the way in which Mahatma Gandhi holds an appeal for people in the West and in India. In the West, Gandhiji has been looked upon as a champion of the supremacy of the individual. In the present age, when the world is swept by large-scale organizations both in industry as well as in politics, the individual seems to have lost nearly all his importance and worth. And if in such an age, Gandhiji stands forth as a symbol of what the individual can be, and even can do, naturally he has an appeal for those who seem to be overwhelmed by the technical and political forces which engulf mankind from all sides.

But in India, the message which Gandhiji himself tried to deliver to his countrymen was partly this, but partly, and also largely, something which was different. Here he pleaded, not so much for individual or personal reform, but more for collective effort, which would create conditions under which the individual would be able to find his supreme fulfilment.

It is quite true that Gandhiji wanted the satyagrahi to strive to become as perfect as possible through the practice of a number of vows which were recommended by him from time to time; but he did not wait for collective action *until* a large band of men had already become perfect or near-perfect by means of inner discipline before he

*Lectures delivered at the University of Poona on 19-21 September 1968. Printed through the kind permission of the Registrar, University of Poona.

launched into action. According to him, the fight could go on along with the preparation for it.

I may recall at least one occasion in which he was asked how he could work in the Indian National Congress, the country's largest democratic political organization, with men who were so different from him, and who harboured ambitions for power and personal influence even while they were prepared to give up their all in the cause of India's freedom. He said on one of these occasions:

Could you give me better men? How do you expect that after centuries of slavery, there will be still men who are ideal in every way? You have to take men as they are, and bring out the best in them. You have to plan your battle in accordance with your actual resources, i.e. the capacity of the army, rather than expect the impossible from them.

This report of a conversation is not an exact one, but a substantially correct paraphrase of what he actually said in course of the conversation. There were also other occasions when he was confronted by similar questions, and his replies, in the same vein, were published in the weekly journals which he edited, namely, the *Young India* and *Harijan*. I am taking the liberty of quoting two such passages from a collection of his writings entitled *Selections from Gandhi*.

For me, the law of complete love is the law of my being. Each time I fail, my effort shall be all the more determined for my failure. But I am *not* preaching that final law through the Congress or the Khilafat. I know that any such attempt is foredoomed to failure. To expect a whole mass of men and women to obey that all at once, is not to know its working. (*Selections from Gandhi*, 1968, p. 44)

This was in 1922. In 1942, he wrote again:

I adhere to the opinion that I did well to present to the Congress non-violence as an expedient. I could not have done otherwise, if I was to introduce it into politics. In South Africa too I introduced it as

an expedient. It was successful there because resisters were a small number in a compact area and therefore easily controlled. Here we had numberless persons scattered over a large country. The result was that they could not be easily controlled or trained. And yet it is a marvel the way they have responded. They might have responded much better and shown better results. But I have no sense of disappointment in me over the results obtained. If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean. Thank God, that though the boat has not reached its haven, it has proved fairly stormproof. (*Ibid.*, p. 44)

It is this extremely practical nature of his idealism which is frequently overlooked. It has often appeared to me personally that the desire to create a god out of the intensely human being that Gandhiji was, we are doing a grave injustice to him. To prove that he was a god is perhaps a left-handed way of saying that what he achieved was only possible for him and not for others. It is a cloak for our irresponsibility, of our intention to shirk the demands which he made upon us. We seek an easy consolation by not striving as he wanted us to strive; but try to secure consolation by worshipping him on stated days, or often by a ritual performance that he laid down before the country when both political and social conditions were different from what they are now.

GANDHIJI'S CHALLENGE

But what was Gandhiji's demand upon the individual? What were his hopes? And how did he expect the common man or woman to respond to them?

There is no gainsaying the fact that life in an ancient country like India is very nearly choked by the numerous ills which have accumulated in our lives through centuries

of social suppression. There are inequalities of wealth and status. For centuries India's social organization had lost its initiative and taken refuge in a tortoise-like retirement within a hard shell of ritualism and orthodoxy. And these had all brought about a state of affairs from which it is hard to escape. One is reminded of the image of Laocoon when we review with objectivity the conditions from which millions of our countrymen suffer.

Those who have realized the gravity of the situation have usually tried to find an escape in one of two ways. Some have retired within a shell of spiritual isolation of their own, either in art or literature, or in a private search of inner perfection; while others have hurled themselves in a blind fury of violence against everything that oppresses life from all around. A few, but only a very few, have tried to shed a little light on the prevailing darkness by means of their little lamps by endeavours of education, social reform and spiritual emancipation. It is this last line of educators and saints to which Gandhiji himself belonged; and indeed in his humility he claimed to be nothing more than one who tried to re-state in his own life the truths which had been enshrined in the lives of an unbroken succession of saints who have enriched the lives of India's humble rural folk.

But as we see him in the historical context, we realize that he was not merely an educator, and one who refused to be beaten by the enormity of the social task which challenges us, but like a valiant knight he hurled himself against every wrong which confronted him, and also called to battle every one of his neighbours, however humble he might appear to others to be.

Gokhale is reported to have said of him that he was capable of turning heroes out of clay. If that is true, and it was indeed substantially true in many cases, what was his secret?

This is indeed the enquiry to which we shall address ourselves; namely, how he could call into heroic social action even the humblest among his countrymen.

GANDHIJI'S OBJECTION TO VIOLENCE

Gandhiji is recognized all the world over as the prophet of non-violence. But if there was anything which he hated most, it was not so much violence, but cowardice, or the desire to avoid battle and accept things as they were. Cowardice, inertia and selfishness were what he could not stand in any form whatsoever, and he preferred violence to a supine acceptance of things or the conditions by which we were surrounded.

But he had one very serious objection against the method of violence. He knew that violence was *natural* in the human breast; but it had two grave shortcomings. It often yielded results which were the opposite of what was wanted. It led from one organization of violence to an even more severe one; while violence also tended to concentrate power in the hands of a *few*, while the many remained substantially devoid of that power, but had only to play a passive role in the game. It was this anaemia of power, so far as the unarmed multitude was concerned, which appeared to Gandhiji to be the most serious drawback in the organization of violence.

And this is why he considered that the greatest problem facing mankind (not India in particular) was the problem of War. (See Appendix to this section.) All his life, the central social problem which he tried experimentally to solve was, how to find a civilized substitute for the method of warfare: something which would be equally effective, and yet could be wielded by the smallest and least among men.

In an introspective mood in 1938, he once wrote:

Satyagraha as conceived by me is a science in the making. It may be what I claim to be a science may prove to be no science at all and may well prove to be the musings and doings of a fool, if not a mad man. It may be that what is true in satyagraha is as ancient as the hills. But it has not yet been acknowledged to be of any value in the solution of world problems or

*rather the one supreme problem of war.** It may be that what is claimed to be new in it will prove to be really of no value in terms of that supreme problem. It may be that what are claimed to be victories of satyagraha, i.e. *ahimsa* were in reality victories not of truth and non-violence but of the fear of violence.

These possibilities have always been in front of me. I am helpless. All I present to the nation for adoption is an answer to prayer or, which is the same thing, constantly waiting on God. (*Ibid.*, p. vii)

Four months before the above passage was written, he had also said:

I am essentially a non-violent man, and I believe in war bereft of every trace of violence. (*Ibid.*, p. 218)

WAR AND SATYAGRAHA COMPARED

How then do we compare war by means of violence and war in terms of non-violence, i.e. satyagraha?

Gandhiji often used to say that the object of satyagraha is to 'change the heart' of the opponent by means of 'self-suffering'. This is in sharp contrast with war which has been defined at least by one authority as a means of imposing the will of one party upon another by means of punishment. And this imposition is brought about by bringing into operation a superior quantity of violence against that of an enemy at a decisive point of time, when the latter is unable to bring into operation an equal amount of striking force, even though his total strength may be greater than that of the victor. War does not 'change the heart' of the enemy through conversion. Defeat may or may not result in fear; it may even set up a desire among the vanquished to lie low for the time being, and prepare for retaliation in the future.

In contrast to this, the satyagrahi's aim is not to inflict defeat upon the enemy. He opposes a wrong by refusing to

*Italics present author's.

co-operate with it. For it was Gandhiji's firm conviction that no wrong could ever endure unless the wrong-doer, as well as the wronged 'co-operated' with one another in its continuance: one through love of power and the other through love of gain or of fear. He taught the people of India that British rule would endure only as long as we wanted it to do so, either willingly or unwillingly. It was the same with respect to a custom like untouchability. If people once realized that these had to be destroyed, and were prepared to suffer for it, by means of non-co-operation, their heroic self-suffering should be able to move even the stoniest of hearts and secure the co-operation of their opponents in building up a new social system without the injustices of the present.

It is not our purpose in the present series of lectures to enter into the psychological possibilities of such a form of struggle as satyagraha happens to be. On the other hand, we shall try to describe and analyse a number of cases of satyagraha, organized by Gandhiji himself or carried out under his advice, or with his knowledge, and observe how he gradually built up the elements of the science and art of satyagraha. Some of these related to the tactical portion of the campaign while others related to the preparation for it.

AN OBJECTION CLEARED

Several students of political science have tried to study the technique of satyagraha with sympathy and detachment. While some have arrived at the conclusion that Gandhian non-violence runs, on the whole, counter to human nature, and the experiences of history, others have held that, as a method of social action, it is worth a fair trial.

One has to remember in this connexion that the methods of warfare have become revolutionized on account of the invention of atomic weapons. On the whole, there has arisen a new interest in guerilla warfare, which is being

more and more perfected in some of the communist countries as a counter against even such massive powers of destruction as can be marshalled by countries like the U.S.A. If revolution in warfare can take place in one direction, there is no harm, I suppose, in trying to gather the experiences of non-violent action as they have been applied from time to time under varying conditions as in India, and to employ it as a substitute for violence.

The number of large-scale, nation-wide political movements organized by Gandhiji may be taken as four, while small movements either organized or guided by him, or carried on by others during his lifetime, and more or less after models set by him, were perhaps about forty in number.

Even if non-violent action is largely against the dictates of science, even if the so-called successes of satyagraha were due not to its own merits, but adventitious causes, I believe personally that it is worth while to examine cases available without prejudice, and with objectivity. If the results are eventually not in favour of satyagraha, but against it, even then it would be worth while to undertake the study. A negative result in science is not necessarily wasted. It may open up ways of understanding which may escape us without them.

At this point, it may be stated that a scientific collection of data with regard to the numerous non-violent movements which have taken place, is a difficult task. Those who undertook these satyagrahas hardly ever left records of their own. Even if they did, they were largely destroyed in course of the raids by the Police which accompanied the greater national struggles. Many of the active participants, or leaders of these movements, are no longer living. Even if they are, their memory of the exact succession of events has, in several cases at least, become imprecise. One of the fundamental rules of satyagraha is that the courage and resistance of the satyagrahis should

be able to evoke the respect and sympathy of their opponents; but in many cases, it is impossible to trace what reactions actually took place in the hearts of those who opposed the satyagrahis.

The reaction of the British Government, or of British public opinion may be partially recovered, but when it was a case of opposition against something like untouchability, as in Vaikom in Kerala, there is hardly any way of determining how the mind of the orthodox Brahmins reacted to the demands of the satyagrahis.

It is only under such severe limitations of material that we shall have to conduct our present enquiry. It goes without saying that the present study would be imperfect; but one can hold the view that it is worth while to try rather than not make the attempt at all, or merely make an endeavour to assess the value or otherwise of satyagraha on the basis of broad psychological generalizations alone.

APPENDIX

THE ESSENCE OF SATYAGRAHA

Up to the year 1906, I simply relied on appeal to reason. I was a very industrious reformer. I was a good draftsman, as I always had a close grip of facts which in its turn was the necessary result of my meticulous regard for truth. But I found that reason failed to produce an impression when the critical moment arrived in South Africa. My people were excited; even a worm will and does sometimes turn—and there was talk of wreaking vengeance. I had then to choose between allying myself to violence or finding out some other method of meeting the crisis and stopping the rot and it came to me that we should refuse to obey legislation that was degrading and let them put us in jail if they liked. Thus came into being the moral equivalent of war. I was then a loyalist, because, I implicitly believed that the sum total of the activities of the British Empire was good for India and for humanity. Arriving in England soon after the outbreak of the war I plunged into it and later on when I was forced to go to India as a result of the

pleurisy that I had developed, I led a recruiting campaign at the risk of my life, and to the horror of some of friends. The disillusionment came in 1919 after the passage of the Black Rowlatt Act and the refusal of the Government to give the simple elementary redress of proved wrongs that we had asked for. And so, in 1920, I became a rebel. Since then the conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason. Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I and I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man. Suffering is the badge of the human race, not the sword. (*Selections from Gandhi*, 1968, pp. 153-54)

II. VARIOUS KINDS OF SATYAGRAHA

INTRODUCTION

Satyagraha movements undertaken during Gandhi-ji's lifetime can be broadly classified into several kinds. Some of these were for the attainment of national political objectives, while others were of local origin, limited to specific demands of various natures. From the point of view of objectives, again, the satyagraha movements were undertaken for the redress of either economic, civic and social, or political grievances. Sometimes, and very naturally, there was an overlap between these objectives. For instance, a movement undertaken for the remedy of a social disability took a political turn, when the Government sided with one class in the maintenance of the *status quo*, or undertook to suppress the movement because it led to a 'disturbance of the peace'. Under such circumstances, what originally began as a specifically economic or social movement, eventually became converted into a political

struggle in which the nation also became involved instead of one particular community which suffered from certain specific disabilities.

At this stage, it may also be useful to point out that even in regard to political movements, the objectives could be of a limited, or of a more generalized or fundamental nature. Thus, for instance, the movement might be aimed at the achievement of a specific reform within the structure of the existing system of government; or it might be for the overthrow of the government itself, and its replacement by another which would be more responsive to the will of the people. In other words, the aim might either be one of reform or of revolution.

By way of illustration, we shall try to analyse a few cases of local satyagraha on specific issues in course of the present lecture, while satyagrahas of a wider compass in which the whole nation, or a large part of it, became involved will be illustrated in the third and last lecture. In the latter, we shall also try to gather together some of the principles involved or tactics developed by Gandhiji in course of his nearly fifty years of experimentation with this new method of collective social action.

SOME OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The advantage in the case of either social or political demands is often this that the satyagrahi is not always called upon to establish the 'morality of his cause', in course of the campaign. He has frequently some amount of favourable, liberal public opinion already operating in his favour. On the other hand, when it is an economic demand which is in question, public opinion may or may not be in his favour in the initial stages. He may have to work harder in order to enlist public support before his opponent is converted to his own point of view as a result of non-violent non-co-operation.

Let us consider a few examples in order to explain this.

Even before Gandhiji led India in her struggle for national independence, the sympathy of many liberal thinkers all over the world was already in favour of the Indian cause. The demand for freedom was widely regarded as just. That point had not to be laboured out at all. All that was actually necessary was to oppose those who did not admit this by means of non-co-operation. The price for freedom had to be paid by the requisite amount of courage and hardship. But in a case of opposition against untouchability, perhaps public opinion all over India was not wholly in favour of the satyagrahis. The liberal section of the public undoubtedly was, but the opposition also was fairly strong; so that the satyagrahis in a place like Vaikom in Kerala had not only to establish the 'morality of their cause' in the public mind, but also to resist those who were ranged against them and thus try for their 'conversion'.

There were other cases in India too in which the issues were economic, but in which the question of morality did not rise there at all. For instance, if the demand was for a reduction of rates payable by farmers for the use of water for irrigation, the demand might be based upon justice, but the question of morality, as usually understood, was irrelevant to such an issue.

The reason why the above discussion has been introduced is in order to draw attention to the fact that the conditions under which satyagraha was conducted in India over nearly two decades tended to vary considerably even in respect of its objectives. If there was widespread public support as in the case of Vaikom, or, say, of the Patuakhali satyagraha in Bengal, the victory eventually scored might not *wholly* have been due to the action of the satyagrahis. If we assume that the cause was just, and if violent disturbances had broken out in its vindication, it is equally likely that the resisters would have won in spite of the fact that the resistance was of a violent nature. It may be that, on a careful analysis, the end-results of non-violence proved

to be better than those of violence; but that would be a different question so far as the immediate redress of a wrong was concerned. What we have been trying to emphasize is that what may sometimes have been claimed to be a victory of non-violence, may not, in some cases at least, have been wholly so.

It would be good, therefore, if we are sufficiently analytical in our study of specific satyagraha movements, and try to assess with accuracy how far satyagrahis succeeded in converting the public, as well as their opponents, to their own point of view, that is, to an acceptance of the justice of their cause *by means of their own action*.

It is with questions of this nature in mind that we shall now turn to a study of a few chosen cases of satyagraha which were carried out with limited objectives in view. Unfortunately, in many cases, the study has not yet been carried in the manner outlined above, so that the following accounts will appear sketchy or imperfect in analysis. Yet, in each, our aim will be to locate as far as possible some of the main factors which were responsible for either the success or the failure of the movements in question.

UNION BOARD BOYCOTT, MIDNAPORE, BENGAL (1921)

During the Non-co-operation movement of 1921, when the whole of India was swept by a new enthusiasm of political action shared by the rural folk as well as by the city people, one of the smaller, but important movements which took place was the Union Board Boycott of Midnapore District in Bengal. Local government in the villages was then of a limited character; and one of the taxes which people had to pay was known as the Chowkidari Tax. In 1921 movement, the British Government decided to introduce another institution, namely, the Union Board in this part of the country. It was felt by the leaders of Bengal, some of whom hailed from Midnapore, that the amount of taxes would go up very much under the new system. It

would cause unnecessary hardship to the villagers, and would also lead to a further extension of the Government's authority in the countryside. Therefore the decision was taken that this should be resisted.

An important fact about the district of Midnapore was that it was predominantly agricultural, and the most important element of the peasant community was formed by two Hindu castes, namely, the Mahishya and Paundra Kshatriya. They had the reputation of being of an adventurous and hard-working nature; well-knit as castes, and economically slightly more prosperous than the peasantry of the neighbouring districts of Hooghly or 24 Parganas.

Birendranath Sasmal, who belonged to this caste, and was a barrister-at-law by profession, took the lead in this agitation. He was ably supported by Iswarchandra Mal, another member of the Mahishya caste; Pramatha Nath Banerji, a Brahmin teacher in a 'National' school; Basanta Kumar Das and Nikunja Behari Maiti, the last two being Paundra Kshatriya and Mahishya by caste respectively. A weekly paper named *Nihar* which was also edited by a Mahishya gentleman, played an important role in the movement.

There was a widespread agitation all over the district; many public meetings were held and resolutions passed in support of the boycott. There was so much solidarity against the proposed governmental measure that eventually the order had to be withdrawn. A feeling of victory swept over the whole district.

The Midnapore boycott was well organized; it was directed against a step taken by the British Government and therefore gathered a political overtone; and the people involved belonged largely to the peasantry, constituted by well-knit Hindu castes, working practically under their own leadership. These elements may have contributed substantially to the solidarity, and eventual success of the agitation. From the point of view of the British Government, again, no particular interest of a serious nature was

involved, except perhaps that of prestige, so that, it was easier for them to yield than if the issues had been of a graver nature.

CANAL AGITATION IN BURDWAN

In 1930, the Government of Bengal decided to raise the rates payable for canal water used for irrigation by farmers in the district of Burdwan. The official demand was set at about five rupees per acre of irrigated land. This was considered to be too high; while another argument was also adduced in order to prove that the rate was moreover unjust.

Floods in the Damodar River were, even according to official reports, largely due to the interference caused in the drainage of the country by the construction of the East Indian Railway line. The Railway Company had therefore decided many years ago to pay the Government a fairly heavy sum of money for flood control. This money had gone on accumulating in the coffers of the Government for decades without being specifically utilized for that purpose. The demand of the public leaders was that the Government could employ that accumulated capital in order to meet the expenses of the canal or of the distribution of water. In any case, the Congress leaders who were responsible for the agitation eventually decided that the water-rate should be no higher than about one rupee and four annas per acre instead of nearly five as officially proposed.

The peasantry belonged to various castes, while the leadership of the Congress was also of a mixed kind, and included both Hindu and Muslim, the Hindus ranging from various castes like the Brahmin to the Ugra Kshatriya peasants. Caste or sect was of no concern here; but among the political workers of the Congress in 1930, there was more or less a growing division into those who claimed to belong to the Left and others who were Nationalists.

When the agitation spread, the peasants refused to pay according to the demands of the Government. The latter tried to enforce their demands, but soon realized that the peasants were fairly well organized. A dialogue was therefore opened with the political leaders of the district. The Government case was that expenses had gone up very much, and even if the contribution of the Railways were admitted, that money had not become available when the canals were dug. So a settlement should be arrived at a point which lay half-way between the rates decided upon by either side.

The offer was thus for a compromise. The Congress leaders who had been carrying on the agitation felt that, *with their present strength of organization*, it would be wise to strike the bargain at that point. The pressure of the Government for the realization of water-rates was great, and there were also signs of wavering and indecision among the peasants, for the latter did not belong to one class, but ranged from a fairly prosperous section to those who possessed no land. If a settlement could be arrived at at this point, it would at least lead to *a sense of success* among those who had tried to resist. A consultation was held in the Congress office, when the senior members pleaded for acceptance of the Government offer. The younger Leftists were however determined to stick to the lowest demand. Eventually the negotiations failed.

At this point, the Government took a decisive step. The Minister in charge of Revenue was a member of an aristocratic family belonging to the district of Burdwan itself, and was also a man of great reputation. As a first step, the Government once more made a determined effort to collect the unpaid water-rates. The police were sent in; and it was reported that they treated the peasants very harshly. Soon after this, the Minister himself visited the area, and met the peasants in person. Those who had been harassed came to see him, when he showed great personal sympathy; advised the peasants not to go to the Congress leaders for

advice, and suggested that *he* would himself take up their case and reduce the water-rate to about half of what had been demanded from them. The new rates thus came into operation; but the peasants never realized that they had scored a victory. Instead, the feeling was that the relief had come because of the Minister's personal intervention and generosity.

The reason why this local agitation has been described in some detail is that although the agitation was conducted in terms of non-violence, it is apparent that the organization of the peasantry was not strong enough to stand the punishment meted out by the Government; while due to one tactical mistake the initiative passed out of the hands of the leaders of the peasantry into those of the Government.

The moral to be drawn from this is that without adequate organization, and with a leadership which tries to reach beyond its strength, there is as much chance of failure as of success even if the cause is just.

PATUAKHALI SATYAGRAHA

After the withdrawal of the Non-co-operation Movement in 1922, and the failure of the Khilafat agitation on account of the secularization of Turkey, relations between the Muslims and Hindus began to worsen all over India. Riots broke out on issues like 'music before mosques' or on account of cow-slaughter and the proselytizing activities of the Arya Samaj. It was during this period that, in the predominantly Muslim district of Backergunge in Bengal, a satyagraha was undertaken by a band of Hindu volunteers who were led by a young revolutionist named Satindranath Sen.

In the small town of Patuakhali, the Muslims objected to any Hindu procession which passed by their mosques if it was accompanied by music. The claim of the satyagrahis was that the roads were public, and therefore the Muslims had no right to prohibit its free use by any

community, provided they were doing nothing which was illegal. Of course, they were prepared to stop music before mosques during the five stated periods when prayers were held; but they were not prepared to concede to the Muslim demand at all hours of the day. So the decision was to assert the right to free use of the streets by Hindu processionists by means of satyagraha.

Small batches of satyagrahis marched in orderly procession, and were very soon attacked by Muslim crowds. The police intervened, and passed a prohibitory order against all kinds of procession for the time being. The result was that the satyagrahis were now pitched in battle, not against the Muslim public, but against the Government itself whose sole aim seemed to be the preservation of law and order. They were not interested in the justice or otherwise of the Muslim claim for ban against 'music before mosques' at any time of the day, or of the Hindu citizens' opposite demand.

The satyagraha of Patuakhali thus became a political issue in which the Hindus insisted upon the free right of the use of public roads for their own religious purposes. The satyagrahis carried on their defiance of the official ban in a well-organized and dignified manner; and the movement soon succeeded in attracting the attention of the nationalist Press all over India, so much so that volunteers began to flock into this corner of Bengal from all parts of the country. The main supply of volunteers however remained restricted to Bengal; and they braved the police repression with great patience and courage.

Eventually the British magistrate tried to bring about a settlement, and in a joint meeting of the Congress and Muslim leaders, the magistrate had to admit that the use of public roads could not be banned in the manner in which the Muslims demanded. At this point, the satyagrahis, of their own accord, agreed that during hours of prayer, they would respect the sentiment of the Muslims and would cease to play music in the neighbourhood of

mosques. Victory was thus achieved; and it did not leave a trail of bitterness between the Hindu and Muslim leaders of Backergunge. They had measured their strength against one another, and at the end of the satyagraha had come to recognize and respect one another.

The organization of the satyagrahis in Patuakhali had been perfected with care, the leadership was also unified; while, the feeling that the Muslim demand was unjust became so widespread that it helped to consolidate the unity of the Hindus still further.

The point therefore is that, unlike the economic demands of the peasantry in Burdwan, there was this feeling of Hindu brotherhood which helped substantially in adding strength to the organization of the satyagrahis. Their determination and non-violent satyagraha undoubtedly contributed very largely to their ultimate victory, but strength was gained from a factor which was not the result of non-violence. It sprang from the sentiment that the Hindus were threatened by the unjust demands of the Muslims, who were, rightly or wrongly, being favoured by the British.

VAIKOM*

Vaikom is a small town in South India which was ruled by the Indian princely house of Travancore till 1947. There is a celebrated Hindu temple here; and the untouchable castes were not only refused admission into the temple in 1924, but some among them were not even allowed to pass by public roads by the side of which Brahmins lived.

In the first quarter of 1924, a satyagraha movement was launched here for opening the roads 'to the so-called untouchables as they were to all other Hindus and even non-Hindus'. Some violence was done by Brahmins to those who notified their intention and tried to march in peaceful procession in defiance of established custom. The

*Based on Bose, N. K. : *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 91-94.

Travancore Government anticipated breach of peace and issued a prohibitory order. Civil resisters defied the order and courted imprisonment. The struggle continued for two years until finally the right of free use of the road was fully established. Some years afterwards, the right of temple-entry by the so-called untouchables was also officially recognized by the State Government.

Gandhiji was not in official leadership of the campaign. Yet he helped civil resisters by constant advice and by widely advertising their cause. It is interesting to study some of the instructions which he issued from time to time, for they throw light upon the fundamentals of the new technique as it developed under his leadership.

With regard to the question whether sympathisers of the 'untouchables' could join the campaign if they belonged to religions other than Hinduism, Gandhiji said:

Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus. They must suffer for it, they must purify themselves, they must pay the debt they owe to suppressed brothers and sisters. Theirs is the shame and theirs must be the glory when they have purified themselves of the black sin.*

He reminded civil resisters that their task required great patience.

In a reform that the Vaikom struggle seeks to achieve, the satyagrahi seeks to convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress. He must therefore resign himself to be excommunicated, debarred from the family privileges and deprived of his share in the family property. He must not only bear such hardships cheerfully but he must actively love his persecutors. The latter honestly believe that the reformer is doing something sinful and therefore resort to the only means they know to be effective to wean him from his supposed error. The satyagrahi

*Italics present author's.

on the other hand *does not seek to carry out his reform by a system of punishments but by penance,** self-purification and suffering. Any resentment of the persecution, therefore, would be an interruption of the course of discipline he has imposed upon himself.

I do not wonder, (he wrote on 14 August 1924, in the *Young India*) that the hearts of the orthodox have not yet been touched by the sufferings of the satyagrahis. They have not suffered long enough yet nor intensely enough. Even suffering cannot be manufactured. They must take whatever God may have in store for them. If He wants them to linger away in suffering, they must submit to it cheerfully. They dare not shirk the severest trial nor may they dare stage-play suffering. (Gandhiji wrote in the same article,) To the orthodox Hindus I need not point out the sovereign efficacy of *tapasya*. And satyagraha is nothing but *tapasya* for Truth.

In defying the prohibitory order of the Government, civil resisters courted gaol. The attitude of the Government, however, was sympathetic; but they had to maintain the peace of the land by trying to prevent clashes between the satyagrahis and those who opposed them. In this connexion, Gandhiji issued explicit instructions about what the attitude of the satyagrahis should be in respect of the official world:

The Travancore authorities, while they still remain unbending regarding the prohibition order, are carrying out their purpose in a courteous manner. The public already know how quickly the authorities tried to check violence against satyagrahis. The treatment in the gaols too is in keeping with their conduct in the open. . . .

Surprise has been expressed over the advice I have tendered to the satyagrahis that whilst satyagraha continues, *the organizers should leave no stone unturned by*

*Italics present author's.

*way of petitions, public meetings, deputations, etc., in order to engage the support of the State and public opinion on their side.** The critics argue that I am partial to the State-authorities because they represent Indian rule, whereas I am hostile to the British authorities because they represent an alien rule. For me every ruler is alien that defies public opinion. . . .

In Travancore the satyagrahis are not attacking a whole system. They are not attacking it at any point at all. They are fighting sacerdotal prejudice. The Travancore State comes in by a side door as it were. Satyagrahis would therefore be deviating from their path if they did not try to court junction with the authorities and cultivate public support by means of deputations, meetings, etc. *Direct action does not always preclude other consistent methods.†* Nor is petitioning etc. in every case a sign of weakness on the part of the satyagrahi. Indeed he is no satyagrahi who is not humble.

In course of satyagraha, the civil resister might reach a point when he has to break a stalemate, and devise some new means of advance. In Gandhiji's own case, he resorted to self-imposed fasts on several occasions in his lifetime. This was an extension of the ancient practice of *dharna*, with the reservation that no supernatural intervention was called for, nor was the fast an instrument of coercion against the opponent. Its sole purpose was to touch the heart of a *sympathiser*, and induce him to be more energetic in the vindication of a cause which he held to be right.

In course of the Vaikom struggle, Gandhiji issued an instruction on this point which was as follows:

Fasting in satyagraha has well-defined limits. You cannot fast against a tyrant, for it will be a species of violence done to him. You invite penalty from

*Italics present author's.

†Italics present author's.

him for disobedience of his orders but you cannot inflict on yourselves penalties when he refuses to punish and renders it impossible for you to disobey orders so as to compel infliction of penalty. Fasting can only be resorted to against a lover, not to extort rights but to reform him as when a son fasts for a father who drinks. . . . I can fast against my father to cure him of a vice, but I may not in order to get from him an inheritance. The beggars of India who sometimes fast against those who do not satisfy them are no more satyagrahis than children who fast against a parent for a fine dress. . . . If the Vaikom satyagrahis fast because the authorities will not arrest them, it will be, I must say in all humility, the beggar's fast described above.

It is noteworthy that Gandhiji was thus trying to extend to the public sphere what had so long been confined in India to private spheres of life. The reader will also observe how, in course of the Vaikom campaign against untouchability, his intention never was to coerce the orthodox opponent into submission, but he constantly told the satyagrahis that their aim was to convert those who, according to them, held wrong views; and never bow down to a custom which was wrong.

There was one additional advantage enjoyed by the satyagrahis in the case of Vaikom. They were dignified, patient, yet courageous; and that attracted public opinion on their side. But above and beyond that was the fact that liberal public opinion all over India was more or less on their side, although it did not always express itself in active support. But when satyagraha was initiated this dormant sympathy was awakened and expressed itself in various forms of assistance which the satyagrahis received. Even the State authorities of Travancore were inwardly in their favour, as is evident in one of the passages quoted above from Gandhiji.

But as we have said, such an advantage is not enjoyed by satyagrahis in every case, particularly if the issue is of a purely economic nature.

CHAMPARAN

We have so far described very briefly four of the minor satyagrahas inspired by the Non-co-operation Movement, or carried out directly under Gandhiji's advice. We shall now turn to a few in which he was personally involved. Three such examples have been chosen, namely, Champaran (1917), Kaira (1918) and Ahmedabad (1918). They are fairly well documented, and give us a deeper insight into the workings of satyagraha. In all these three, again, the issues were wholly of an economic nature.*

Champaran is a district in northern Bihar where the relation between indigo-planters and ryots in northern Bihar had been strained ever since the second quarter of the 19th century. It continued to be so until 1917 when Gandhiji came upon the scene.

During 1907 and 1908, three farmers named Seikh Gulab, Sital Ray and Radhemal organized a resistance movement against the planters' oppression. As a result, they were ordered by the local Government to enrol themselves as Special Constables. This was meant to be a measure of keeping them away from the movement. The peasants refused, and were then convicted for disobedience of orders. An appeal was however preferred at the High Court, when the conviction was set aside in March 1908. Several leading newspapers in Calcutta and Patna took up the cause of the ryots and gave it fairly wide publicity. But the oppression continued unabated. Indeed, during the First World War, the Planters' Association and a voluntary defence organization named Bihar Light Horse 'practically guided the administration of the province'. The ryots remained unorganized and benumbed with fear; while a

*All these three studies are quoted from the author's *Studies in Gandhism*, 1962, pp. 136-143.

few educated persons who sympathized with them did not dare to take up their cause actively.

It was in this state of affairs that a local peasant named Rajkumar Shukla decided to attend the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow in December 1916, in order to lay down the case of the ryots before national leaders. It eventually transpired that the Congress passed a resolution urging upon the Government to appoint a committee of enquiry into the causes of the agrarian trouble and strained relations between the indigo ryots and the European planters in North Bihar. Gandhiji was in that Congress and Shukla saw him here, as well as in Calcutta. Subsequently, in order to acquaint himself personally with the situation, Gandhiji reached Bihar on 10 April 1917.

The Government immediately issued an order upon him to quit the district. But Gandhiji refused, pleaded guilty and expressed his willingness to accept any punishment, but not abandon the enquiry on which he had come. This refusal to obey a Government order at once made him a hero of the peasants. Thousands of farmers flocked into the town in order to have their statements recorded. The fear of the planters and of the police, in whose presence statements were often recorded after careful cross-examination, seemed suddenly to have become considerably relaxed.

Eventually, the Government withdrew the case against Gandhiji for disobedience of orders; a committee of enquiry was appointed officially, and the findings of the band of volunteers who had assisted Gandhiji was fully confirmed. Within a short time, an Act was passed in spite of initial resistance by planters; and in a few years indigo plantation became a thing of the past in Bihar. Already the industry had become seriously crippled by its synthetic substitute.

An analysis of the Champaran satyagraha shows at least one thing. It was the courage of the leader which

helped to galvanize the courage of the masses. They had already proved their worth in 1908; but then the resistance had been limited to individuals or small groups. But now, on account of the open character of Gandhiji's defiance, and his quiet courage and determination, the example seemed suddenly to have become infectious among the peasantry. Thousands followed his example, and the movement became a positive political force.

One might also draw attention to the fact that the morality of the ryots' demand was already an established fact. Gandhiji only organized a detailed investigation in order to lay it upon the firm foundation of exactness and justice.

It is also interesting to draw attention to a remark made by Gandhiji in this connexion which was recorded by Rajendraprasad. Mrs. Annie Besant had been interned a short while ago on account of agitation for Home Rule which she led at the time, and her internment had almost convulsed the whole country. Gandhiji himself was ardently in favour of Home Rule for India. But when Rajendraprasad, who was involved in the satyagraha of Champaran, expressed a desire to participate in that agitation, he was advised by Gandhiji not to do so, but concentrate on the work in Champaran. "By the very silence (they) were doing the highest kind of Home Rule work."

This advice sprang from two reasons. One was, Gandhiji wanted the workers to concentrate wholly upon the present task. The other was, that he wanted to set his opponents at ease. Indeed he wrote,

In consultation with my co-workers I had decided that nothing should be done in the name of the Congress. What we wanted was work and not name, substance and not shadow. For the name of the Congress was a *bete noire* of the Government and their controllers—the planters.

KHEDA OR KAIRA

In Champaran, peasants had not been called upon to participate in satyagraha directly; Gandhiji's was the solitary example of civil disobedience. The Governor of Bihar was himself sympathetic, and the Government came to the aid of the ryots. So the planters had eventually to capitulate. But the circumstances in Kaira District in Gujarat were essentially different in 1918.

Crops had failed, and peasants prayed for a suspension of revenue. Gandhiji was then President of the Gujarat Sabha. This organization, as well as some members of the Servants of India Society, initiated a detailed economic enquiry, and concluded that the prayer of the peasants was justified. Government was however reluctant to make an admission. Gandhiji, therefore, organized meetings with the help of his wife and of V. J. Patel and others. A declaration was signed by hundreds and hundreds of peasants to the effect that they would rather "allow their land to be confiscated than pay either full or the remaining revenue".

Gandhiji's endeavour was to lift the economic battle to a political plane. In a speech on 6th April 1918, he is reported to have said that if they wanted to gain *Swarajya* they ought to learn to be firm in their vows. He then exhorted them to keep faith in themselves and not depend upon others. If it failed, agriculturists in other parts of India would not rise for a long time. In a Press statement dated 17 April 1918, Gandhiji said among other things:

There is no mistaking the fact that India is waking up from its long sleep. The ryots do not need to be literate to appreciate their rights and duties. They have but to realize their invulnerable power and no Government, however strong, can stand against their will. The Kaira ryots are solving an imperial problem of the first magnitude in India. They will show that it is impossible to govern men without their consent. . . . This

struggle is not for suspension of land revenue only, but it involves the interests of thirty crores of people. . . .

This is a struggle for self-government.

What happened afterwards is best related in the words of C. Sankaran Nair, Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. He added an Appendix on Kaira recording his note of dissent with regard to the proposed reform in which it was said,

The Government rent or revenue was not paid. Properties, including household utensils, milch cows, were attached, orders for forfeiture of lands were issued by Government and all possible steps were taken by the Revenue officials to enforce payment of revenue . . . the Commissioner himself called a meeting of all the ryots and . . . (told) them not to heed their advisers, the Home Rulers, who themselves will not suffer in person for the consequences of non-payment of revenue. But the ryots persisted in their attempt. Meetings were held in various parts of India expressing their sympathy with the movement. The Government regarded it as a contest between themselves and the Home Rulers. Every form of pressure was applied, but the resistance of the people stiffened. The village headmen also turned against the Government. . . . On the 25th of April the Government suspended the collection of revenue by ordering that only those who were in a position to pay the revenue need do so, and the rest might do it next year.

Victory of a kind was thus registered; but Gandhiji was not satisfied with the results. In his *Autobiography* he has recorded that "the people had already become exhausted, and he hesitated to let the unbending to be driven to utter ruin". The Governmental decision therefore came as a welcome relief. But although "the poor were to be granted suspension, hardly any got the benefit of it. It was the people's right to determine who was poor, but they could not exercise the right."

AHMEDABAD

While the satyagraha in Kaira was in full operation, Gandhiji became involved in a labour dispute in Ahmedabad under rather exceptional circumstances.

While in Bombay in connexion with Kaira, he met Ambalal Sarabhai, one of the textile magnates of Ahmedabad. This was on 2 February 1918. The latter told him about the strained relation between employer and employed in Ahmedabad. Labourers had been receiving for some time past a bonus amounting to between 70 and 80% of their wages. There was a rumour that this would be discontinued; and labourers had become restive. On 11 February 1918, again, the Collector of Ahmedabad asked for a meeting with Gandhiji in order 'to understand the real situation'. If the report of Gandhiji's secretary, Mahadev Desai, is correct, it appears that he decided to "take measures to prevent developments which might endanger the peace of the city of Ahmedabad".

As usual, Gandhiji proceeded to Ahmedabad, and after detailed investigation decided that the labourers' demand of 50% was not as justifiable as 35% below which it could not be reduced any further. After strenuous endeavour, he persuaded the labourers to bring down their demand, and also take a vow that they would stand by it in a civil manner whatever the consequences. A board of arbitration was set up with the co-operation of the mill-owners in which both interests were represented. The representatives on behalf of labour were Gandhiji, Shankerlal Banker and Vallabhbhai Patel.

In the meanwhile, a few labourers had gone on strike. This was wrong, as arbitration had already been agreed to, and no decision had yet been arrived at. Consequently, Gandhiji tendered an apology on their behalf and persuaded the strikers to withdraw. The mill-owners, however, promptly utilized the strike as an excuse for cancellation of arbitration. They staged a lock-out; and in consequence, the fight became more intensified. After 18 days, the lock-out was lifted and employers offered a bonus of 20% to those who would return.

Every evening, Gandhiji used to meet the labourers at a place near his residence. Daily bulletins were issued, read

out and discussed. He tried to keep the labourers firm in their resolve, while supplementary sources of earning were also explored. But this could not naturally be enough for all. Some began to waver; and one day a co-worker of Gandhiji was twitted by a few labourers who said, "Gandhiji and Anasuyabehn move in a car, eat sumptuous food, but we are suffering death agonies. Attending meetings does not prevent starvation." The news stung Gandhiji to the quick and he decided to undertake a fast, ostensibly in order to keep the labourers 'firm in their vow'. In his *Autobiography*, however, he has recorded a significant question in regard to this fast: "Was it pride or was it my love for the labourers and my passionate regard for truth that was at the back of this feeling,—who can say?"

In any case, the result was that emotions were deeply stirred. Labourers re-affirmed their pledge; mill-owners felt thoroughly uneasy, and some justifiably cast sarcastic aspersions upon Gandhiji for the manner in which he had turned public resentment against them.

Eventually, however, arbitration was restored; and the fast came to an end. The new arbitrator upheld the demand of the labourers; this was given effect to, and everyone felt happy.

An analysis of the Ahmedabad mill-strike and the part played by Gandhiji in it leads one to about the same conclusion as in the case of Champaran, namely, that in a non-violent organization of the masses, very much seems to depend upon the quality of the officer or officers in command. If they stick to the battle-field, their example becomes contagious. But the Ahmedabad case leads us to another observation also. When the crisis reached serious proportions, it was almost the adoration of the leader as a person which somehow stemmed defeat. One can, of course, argue that this is also true of war of the ordinary kind, particularly when an army is confronted by an extremely critical situation. But we must recognize that there is also a difference.

In war, one General may succeed another and yet carry on the battle with inflexible determination. But even when in a critical battle, the highest moral and intellectual qualities of the commanding officer are called for, the operations are still carried on by soldiers in company with their commander. They share the responsibility of either victory or defeat in loyal companionship with the officer who comes nearer and nearer to them, and becomes their 'loved' one, in a sense.

In contrast, there is a feature in, at least these early campaigns of Gandhiji's political career in India, which seemed to make matters move in a different direction. In a critical situation, as at Ahmedabad, when he undertook a fast which proved to be the decisive action, too much seemed to depend upon him alone. He gained immensely in moral stature and popular reverence as a consequence. The whole of India became concerned about his life; but by that very act he became a little distant from those on whose behalf the supreme step had been undertaken. Whatever might be the anticipated results in the more distant future, the immediate effect was to build up a one-man army, while the rest found themselves playing a rather unimportant or secondary role in the battle.

In other words, in the Ahmedabad strike, there were signs of a possible drift towards a concentration of moral authority. The worship of Gandhiji increased. And this might also be regarded as a left-handed manner in which his lieutenants perhaps tried to say that what was possible for him was not possible for others. We may presume that this was exactly the opposite of what Gandhiji actually desired. We shall see later on how he took specific steps for its prevention, and how such steps were sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful.

One may perhaps be pardoned for noting at this stage that the organization of collective non-violence becomes a complicated and delicate process. The drift towards moral authoritarianism has to be prevented; while opera-

tions have also to be preserved from perpetually moving in the direction of 'personal' action, or the joint action of a few 'perfect' or 'near-perfect' individuals. Such an eventuality may become necessary at specific moments of a campaign. But the progressive involvement of the masses has to be maintained intact.

On the other hand, the movement may keep true to the principles of non-violence; but may also slide into impatient outbursts of violence. And when this happens, the supreme problem becomes one of controlling the expressions of violence, and yet maintaining the active and enthusiastic character of the non-violent campaign.

III. LARGE-SCALE SATYAGRAHAS

INTRODUCTION

In the last lecture, we dealt with a few selected cases of satyagraha employed for the redress of specific grievances. In course of his instruction to the Vaikom satyagrahis, Gandhiji issued an instruction which, we believe, was one of wider applicability. This was with reference to whether sympathetic satyagrahas could be initiated by those who were not directly involved in a situation of conflict. His instruction was as follows:

It is the essence of satyagraha that those who are suffering (from a particular wrong—N. K. B.) should alone offer it. Cases can be conceived when what may be termed sympathetic satyagraha may be legitimately applied. The idea underlying satyagraha is to convert the wrong-doer, to awaken the sense of justice in him, to show him also that without the co-operation, direct or indirect, of the wronged the wrong-doer cannot do the wrong intended by him. If the people in either case are not ready to suffer for their causes, no outside help in the shape of satyagraha can possibly bring true deliverance. (*Selections from Gandhi*, 1968, p. 232)

In any case, Gandhiji's clear instruction with regard to specific grievances, where the wrong was clearly felt by the community in question was that such issues could be taken up by satyagrahis without the kind of preparation which is necessary where nation-wide demands of a political character are involved. In such cases, political education and organization are all the more necessary because the wrongs are not always clearly defined in the minds of the people, and ideas about their remedy may also be equally diffuse in nature.

Gandhiji's ultimate object in all satyagrahas was to so organize the campaign that power would eventually come to the 'masses' instead of the 'classes'. But where millions of people were involved, and the majority of them were unorganized, the beginnings of education and organization had naturally to be made by and through the middle-classes. While explaining the role which the latter were to play in the Non-co-operation Movement of 1921, Gandhiji wrote:

I do not rely merely upon the lawyer class or highly educated men to enable the Non-co-operation Committee to carry out all the stages of non-co-operation. My hope lies with the masses so far as the later stages of non-co-operation are concerned. (*Ibid.*, p. 228) (Again,) the progress of the nation cannot be arrested by any person or class. The uneducated artisans, the women, the men in the street, are taking their share in the movement. . . . The appeal to the educated classes paved the way for them. The goats had to be sifted from the sheep. The educated classes had to be put upon their trial. The beginning had to be made by and through them. (*Ibid.*, p. 127)

Answering a charge laid against Congressmen by the British Viceroy in 1921, Gandhiji wrote:

His Excellency has been misled by his advisers in believing that non-co-operationists have only now

turned their attention to the masses. Indeed, they are our sheet-anchor. But we are not going to tamper with them. We shall continue patiently to educate them politically till they are ready for safe action. There need be no mistake about our goal. As soon as we feel reasonably confident of non-violence continuing among them in spite of provoking executions, we shall certainly call upon the sepoy to lay down his arms and the peasantry to suspend payment of taxes. We are hoping that that time may never be reached. We shall leave no stone unturned to avoid such a serious step. But we will not flinch when the moment has come and the need has arisen. (*Ibid.*, p. 229)

An important instruction about large-scale satyagraha was that the movement should be of a progressive character. As we study the three nation-wide political movements of 1921, 1930-32 and 1942, we notice how, in the first movement of 1921, Gandhiji suggested steps which would lead the British Government to do no more than send satyagrahis to gaol, or impose fines upon them, and perhaps, in exceptional circumstances, also open fire. The whole of India thus became accustomed to what might be called 'a mild form of repression'. And therefore in the civil disobedience movement of 1930-32, the people took to bolder steps, when shooting by the police became more common than in 1921. In the Quit-India Movement of 1942, it is not known what actual steps of civil disobedience would have been recommended by Gandhiji, if his proposed negotiation or dialogue with the Viceroy had not failed as it did. His cryptic message that 'We should do or die' was alone available, and this spread so widely all over the country that the masses began to take the boldest steps of which they were capable. They defied authority in a manner they had never done before.

This progressive character of satyagraha was not the result of any historical accident. It was clearly a design of Gandhiji; for in one of his directives, his instruction to

satyagrahis was that they should keep their demands at a minimum level alone. 'The minimum should be the maximum.' This demand should not be enlarged even if there was an access of power in course of the struggle. But when one point of the battle was gained, the satyagrahi or the 'non-violent man' was to carry 'war into the enemy's camp'; his non-violence must 'enter into the mouth of violence'.

There was one more point in the way in which Gandhiji designed his actual battles of non-violence. This related to the question of initiative and retreat. Battles were designed by him so that the initiative should always lie in the hands of the satyagrahi. Even when defeat seemed to be imminent, the withdrawal of forces was planned in such a manner that a sense of having been beaten for the time being was kept down at a minimum level. Thus, if a massive civil disobedience was in operation, under certain conditions, he converted it into a civil disobedience of a few selected individuals. In one case, at least, he reserved the right of civil resistance to himself alone, while the rest of the civil resisters were sent back to their posts to work out the Constructive Programme.

Personally, Gandhiji had a strong sense of humour, and the jokes which he enjoyed most were those which had been turned against himself. On one occasion, an interviewer asked him if there could be no defeat in non-violence. Normally, his answer should have been that a satyagrahi tries to find a way out even under the most difficult of circumstances; he never gives up hope. But on this occasion his answer was that, with inadequate preparation, there could be defeat as in the case of inadequate preparation under violence. Where then was the difference? Gandhiji's answer was that defeat in non-violence was less costly than under violence; for the satyagrahi at least saves the money which the violent man wastes on arms.

ROWLATT ACT, 1919 & NON-CO-OPERATION 1921*

Those who are interested in the detailed history of the Non-co-operation Movement may profitably read the *Indian Annual Register* of 1919 to 1923, or *The History of Indian Culture*, edited by R. C. Mazumdar, or *The History of the Indian National Congress* by Pattabhi Sitaramayya or the present author's *Studies in Gandhism*. Our purpose in the present lecture will be to draw in broad outline some of the salient events, in order to gather together the important principles which Gandhiji laid down for the guidance of satyagraha campaigns.

(a) ROWLATT ACT

It began with about the end of the First World War. Under alien rule, India had participated as best it could to promote the cause of the Allies. And it had been the hope and expectation of political leaders that a substantial measure of representative government would be granted as a result of post-war reconstruction. In spite of being an avowed pacifist, Gandhiji had put in his weight in a recruiting campaign which nearly ruined his health. He still believed that, in spite of proved limitations, the British Empire was still an important instrument of progress for India, and a citizen had to perform his duties rightly in fair weather and foul if he wanted to enjoy the full rights of citizenship.

On 20 August 1917, the Secretary of State for India made an announcement that the policy of the British Government was to promote "progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". This created mixed feelings. Some political parties were jubilant, while others were more cautious, and reacted by a demand for the early recognition of India's right of self-determination.

*Much of the following account is quoted with modification from the author's *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1962.

Even while the war was in progress, an order dated 10 December 1917 had been passed and the Sedition Committee 1918 set up under the chairmanship of Justice S. A. T. Rowlatt. The Committee submitted its report on 15 April 1918 in which it was concluded that India was infested by dangerous anarchistic revolutionaries, and existing laws were inadequate for coping with the situation. As a result, two Bills were placed before the Indian Legislative Council; and subsequently passed with the Governor-General's consent on 21 March 1919, in spite of strong opposition in the Council from representative Indians like Srinivas Sastri or Madan Mohan Malaviya. Indian public opinion was completely flouted. Gandhiji, on his own part as a private citizen, addressed personal letters to the Viceroy and issued statements in the Press, and eventually decided to take the extreme step of satyagraha immediately on the eve of the date on which the Bills were to become law.

On 28 February 1919, he issued a statement to the Press in accompaniment with the Satyagraha Pledge. As it might not be possible for existing institutions to adopt satyagraha, "a separate body called the Satyagraha Sabha was established" at his instance. The pledge was signed by many; bulletins were issued and meetings held. But, for one reason or another, it was Gandhiji's feeling, as he said, that "there was not likely to be much chance of agreement between myself and the intelligentsia composing the Sabha". Yet Gandhiji's hope was that the response would be favourable in provinces like Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sindh. But, actually the *hartal*, or suspension of business, with which satyagraha was initiated was observed in an unexpectedly successful manner all over the country.

In a number of places like Delhi or Bombay, the police either made armed charges for dispersing peaceful processions, or resorted to firing. Crowds became more and more restive; and there was hardly any means of bringing order

and discipline, which are the keystones of satyagraha. Then at Nadiad in Gujarat, the thought flashed upon Gandhiji that it had been "*wrong for him to permit people to undertake civil disobedience even before they had qualified themselves by a course of strenuous discipline of obedience to laws or to voluntary institutions.*"* This error on his part was designated by him as a 'Himalayan miscalculation'; and the movement was forthwith withdrawn.

(b) NON-CO-OPERATION

Gandhiji's real participation in the Congress dates from the Amritsar Session of 1919. After the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act Satyagraha he became more closely involved in the Congress organization itself. Meanwhile, after the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act Satyagraha, he tried to educate the whole country in the technique and requirements of satyagraha. This was done by means of extensive lecture tours, and through two weekly newspapers, *Young India* and *Navajivan* (in Gujarati), of which he became the editor.

The programme sponsored by Gandhiji consisted of (a) surrender of titles, etc., (b) refusal to attend Government functions, (c) withdrawal of children from educational institutions connected with Government, (d) gradual boycott of courts, (e) refusal of the military, etc. to serve in Mesopotamia, (f) a complete boycott of the Reformed Council and (g) boycott of foreign goods.

Although the items in the programme were of a negative character, yet it is of great significance that Gandhiji always took special care to have another set of programmes of a positive or constructive kind. Thus, during the Non-co-operation Movement, he wanted that in place of the schools or colleges connected with the Government, we should simultaneously organize 'National' schools and even Universities in which the courses should be of a new kind more closely related to the educational needs of

*Italics present author's.

the nation. A boycott of courts could not be achieved unless corresponding institutions could be built up whose main purpose should be to dispense justice, and as expeditiously as possible. Foreign goods, and more particularly foreign cloth, could only be effectively boycotted if we could organize the manufacture of cloth all over the country by means of the simple spinning-wheel. Two more items were also subsequently added to the programme, namely, the establishment of Hindu-Muslim unity, and social reform which would lead to the removal of untouchability.

This is how Gandhiji's famous 'Constructive Programme' came into being. According to him, it was not enough to somehow capture political power for the people of India, but it was also necessary that, in course of preparation for the campaign, we should also be made familiar with the kind of life, or the new form of society, which was our intention to build up in place of the old. A mere replacement of British rulers by a set of Indian rulers was not 'independence of the masses' in Gandhiji's judgement.

As early as 1909, he had therefore said that the true task of the revolutionist in India should be to find out how even the masses who had no arms in their hands could, in an organized manner, gain the power to rule over their own lives. And, as he said "if any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian". (N. K. Bose, *Studies in Gandhism*, 1962, p. 39)

It is therefore very important to remember that the element of non-violent struggle, as well as the programme of building up a new kind of society were closely interwoven in Gandhiji's plan of action. The kind of social or political and economic structure which he wanted to build up was substantially different from what many of India's great national leaders tried to build up. Gandhiji was firstly not a 'nationalist' in the usual sense of the term. Secondly, there was to be social equality between men of different

sects in India, just as differences between castes were to be wiped out. No work which was necessary for sustaining the life of the nation was to be considered either as high or low. The wages to be paid for all forms of socially useful labour were also to be equal. Individual differences would persist till the end of time; but they were not to be consolidated, by means of the law of inheritance of private property into 'classes'. But Gandhiji did not at once expect or even advise the Indian National Congress to subscribe to his radical, but anarchistic views, in this respect. He wanted, at least, a band of dedicated constructive workers to work for the equalitarian ideal, educate and organize the masses so that they might labour for the ideal; and he thought that eventually the rest of the country would also follow.

As the Non-co-operation Movement proceeded for some time, Gandhiji prepared to launch into a no-tax campaign in order to bring the movement to a head. A small part of a district in Gujarat was chosen for the purpose; because the inhabitants of this taluka (or sub-district) had qualified themselves by working out the Constructive Programme to Gandhiji's satisfaction. When all was ready Gandhiji sent a declaration to the British Viceroy that the most important step of no-tax campaign would begin on a specified date; because the wrongs for whose redress the nation had been agitating had remained uncorrected.

But, in the meanwhile, after Gandhiji had addressed his letter to the Viceroy on 1 February 1922, there was an outbreak of mob-violence in a place called Chauri Chaura in U.P. when 22 police constables were killed. Unfortunately, in Gandhiji's judgement, some members of the Congress organization were also weak or involved in this act of violence.* And when he thus realized that the organization itself was not sufficiently well knit, when the

*Cf. Letter from Mahatma Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru dated Bardoli, February 19, 1922 in Nehru: *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Asia Pub. House, 1958, pp. 22-25.

orders of the leaders were not duly carried out in terms of the technique of non-violence, Gandhiji did not hesitate to suspend mass civil disobedience for the time being. The right of individual civil disobedience however remained; and the people of India were advised to concentrate upon constructive work before active non-violent resistance could once more be permitted.

This withdrawal of the movement by Gandhiji was against the judgement and advice of the majority of India's national leaders. But Gandhiji was adamant in his decision.

Within the next few years, a clear split occurred between those who strictly followed Gandhiji, the No-changers, and those who wanted to enter the legislatures and carry on a political struggle even from within them, as some of the Irish nationalists had done before. Within the Congress, Gandhiji still commanded the majority in numbers; but when it came to the leaders, many of the most important among them subscribed to the opposite view held by men like Motilal Nehru or C. R. Das.

Gandhiji realized clearly within a short time that a rift was growing up between those whom he claimed to represent and the 'educated classes'. But he did not allow this to affect the solidarity of the Indian National Congress, which, according to him, represented the democratic will of the whole country. So, in spite of having a majority on his own side, he prevented a breach with those who formed the Swarajya Party and wanted to carry on the campaign of freedom from within the legislatures. The Swarajya Party was given recognition as a wing of the Congress, enjoyed its fullest blessings; while Gandhiji diverted his attention to the organization of the production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, and of 'national' education, and so on.

This process of the polarization of forces, and a growing cleavage between the Gandhian and non-Gandhian programmes went on till about 1930. In the meanwhile, as

the Swarajya Party carried on its programmes within the legislatures, a more radical political force also began to grow up among the youth, as well as labourers in various parts of the country. This was undoubtedly due to two important events, namely, the rise of Socialist Russia on the one hand, and the spread of the economic depression all over the world in the late twenties of the century.

The more radical forces within the country demanded that the aim of the Indian National Congress should be declared to be the attainment of full independence; India would have nothing more to do with the British Empire. On the other hand, revolutionists who were not within the Congress, but who had stayed their hands on account of the mass upsurge in the wake of the Non-cooperation Movement, now came out in the open and proceeded to work for a violent overthrow of the British in India.

Gandhiji watched the development with care and caution. And when the Indian National Congress radically altered its political objective and adopted Independence as its goal in the end of 1929, at the session held in Lahore, he found himself called back once more from his virtual political retirement, in order to lead the country in a campaign designed for the assertion of its will of independence.

SALT MOVEMENT AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, 1930-32

And so the satyagraha for the breach of the salt monopoly of the Government began in April 1930. When the programme was first announced by Gandhiji, everybody seemed to entertain doubts about its possible utility. But his argument was that the salt monopoly affected every single citizen of India; it was, firstly, unjust and, secondly, the masses would be able to participate in it to the widest extent possible. Indeed Gandhiji is reported to have said that when the movement would begin, the whole of India would rise like a surging tide. And this actually came about,

to the surprise of the British rulers as much as of the educated classes of India.

The movement swept like a hurricane all over the country. Many thousands courted imprisonment, while some of the bravest acts of heroism were registered within the span of about two years in places like Midnapore in Bengal, or among the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier Province, where the population was predominantly Muslim.

The original tempo of the movement however slowed down to some extent; yet it remained strong enough all over the country to cause considerable headache to the British rulers. In the meantime, the party of revolutionists, i.e. those whose methods were of violence, also increased their activities. The admiration which they evoked, more particularly among the educated classes, or the way everyone who shed his life in a revolutionary cause was silently or openly admired, and almost worshipped by the common people, led the British rulers to alter their strategy.

They had promised political reforms formerly, and had called various Liberal leaders of India to a Round Table Conference in order to come to some kind of a settlement. But when the power and strength of the Congress was on the ascendant, and it was not party to the Conference, a second effort was made in order to draw in that organization as well in a second Round Table Conference.

Eventually, the Congress agreed to participate, and Gandhiji was sent as its sole representative to England in the end of 1931. The Conference did not produce any satisfactory result; but Gandhiji utilized the opportunity for defining some of his most radical views in regard to the economic and political structure of the country. For instance, he proposed that in future India, all possessions should be subjected to scrutiny, and if they were discovered to be 'not in the best interests of the nation', they would be confiscated without compensation. And in such a task of scrutiny, no distinction would be drawn between Indian or British interests.

Soon after the virtual failure of the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji returned home. In the meanwhile the British Government had tightened its grip, and taken the offensive, so that, Gandhiji and the satyagrahis once more found themselves faced by the demands of another civil disobedience movement. This movement in 1932 spread to a wider extent than the Salt Satyagraha of 1930, and maintained its tempo for another year.

But by the middle of 1933, the British Government made certain proposals of Constitutional Reform; and, as part of it, they proposed to grant separate electorates to the Depressed Hindu Castes, and thus separate them from those who were above.

Gandhiji realized the danger, and even while he was in gaol, tried to stem the disaster by means of his own technique. He appealed to the whole body of Hindus to rise and do away with the custom of untouchability. And in order to force the issue, he went on a fast, which would be unto death, if the Hindus were not responsive enough.

The result of this decision on his part touched the whole nation and, within a short time, Hindus all over the country tried to do everything for the eradication of untouchability. Thousands of meetings were held, 'upper' and 'lower' castes fraternized with one another, and sent letters to the British Prime Minister that untouchability was no longer there.

Gandhiji's fast was eventually ended when national leaders, belonging to all castes, came to a settlement among themselves regarding the representation of the Depressed Castes and the rest in the State and Central Legislatures. This was known as the Communal Award. It was however directly the result of a feeling among Congressmen that unless they come to a settlement of this kind, the British Government would be able to cause infinite harm to the country in future if the proposed political reforms were to be based upon separate electorate among the Hindus

themselves. Separate electorate had already driven a wedge between Hindus and Muslims; and in order to prevent a similar disaster overtaking the body of Hindus, they took recourse to the political arrangements registered in the Communal Award as the lesser among the two evils.

The Communal Award came in for a large amount of advance criticism from provinces like Bengal, for instance. But our aim is not to consider its pros and cons. Our intention is to draw attention to the fact that, as a result of the widespread mass movements of 1930 and 1932, coupled as they were by the increasing tide of Leftism among the youth of the country, and by the mounting activity of the revolutionists in Bengal, U.P., Punjab and other places, the British thought it wise to come to terms with the people. And thus came into being the Constitutional Reforms of 1935.

This was obviously not the result of any *one* of the forces described above; but all of them collectively led to a result in which the franchise was extended to a large extent, and political power seemed to have come to the people to a measure which was greater than ever before.

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

The subsequent history of India need not be discussed in detail. It is well known how, after the Reforms of 1935, the Congress fought the elections and won, and eventually took charge of the Government in seven provinces. This Government tried to carry on administration under various pressures. Some of these pressures came from the rising demands of a growing body of middle-class; some of it was due to the increasing consolidation of Muslim forces, which were also becoming 'modernized'; and some of it was undoubtedly due to the statesmanship of the British, who were still in possession of the largest quantum of political power, and used it in various ways in order to weaken India by encouraging divisive forces, wherever they existed, to assert themselves in every way.

Eventually, the Second World War came; the Congress gave up its rule in all the provinces under it, and plunged into what was known as the Quit-India Movement in 1942. Those who are interested in its history are once more referred to the books of history which have been named before. Our present purpose is however different.

We have seen how Gandhiji designed the massive satyagraha movements; and how also he recommended, not once, but several times in the course of the great national movements that the major forces of the country should be employed in constructive endeavour rather than in militant activities.

The objectives for which the nation struggled, or the aims which were actually realized were not different from those recommended or realizable by constitutional agitation or even by violent resistance. The point is that, although Gandhiji did try hard to familiarize men with a new equalitarian kind of society to which his heart was set, it does not appear that a new idealism was actually built up as a result of these constructive activities. Their influence was too limited to produce a dent upon the nationalistic or Liberal or even Leftist ideologies which swept the land, and were the product of forces other than those of Gandhiji's own endeavour, or of those who subscribed closely to his political and economic ideals.

What we have tried to indicate so far is that large-scale satyagraha in India operated more as a substitute method of direct action in which the masses could also participate. But as one who believes that this was a worthwhile experiment, please allow me to close by saying that the time may not be very distant when the method of massive satyagraha may have to be tried over again under circumstances which might be more propitious. During the period of 1921 to 1942, the demands of national independence became so increasingly important, that it was not possible for satyagraha, on a large scale, to bring about the emancipation of the 'masses' or 'working classes' as

Gandhiji had envisaged it in 1909. Even then, it was never a failure.

Perhaps, as issues become more and more clarified, and constructive work is designed in a new manner in order to instil not only strength but also the desire to build up a new social order, a time or opportunity may come when the masses will continue the experiment initiated by Gandhiji and achieve the emancipation which he desired for them; when they would be able "to demonstrate that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused". (*Selections from Gandhi*, 1968, p. 114)

4

GANDHIJI AND HIS CONCEPT OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY*

I

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel highly honoured by the invitation to deliver the Kunda Datar Memorial Lectures at the University of Delhi. It is in the fitness of things that a series of lectures has been instituted in order to deal with the social, economic and political problems connected with women. I feel particularly honoured because men of such eminence as Professor D. R. Gadgil and Justice Gajendragadkar were my predecessors. So when the invitation was offered, I felt hesitant; but eventually decided that I could perhaps present before the University the story of how Gandhiji himself looked upon the problems of women, and also how his ideas in this respect had influenced the course of

*The Kunda Datar Memorial Lecture, delivered at the University of Delhi on 28-29 October 1968. Reprinted with the kind permission of the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

his life and philosophy. This would be indeed part of my tribute to Gandhiji when we are celebrating the centenary of his birthday.

While dealing with the subject, my proposal is to break it up into two sections, in one of which we can examine what role women played in the personal life of Mahatma Gandhi, while in the second part, our purpose will be to describe how this eventually affected his public life or his social philosophy.

As one reads carefully Gandhiji's *Autobiography*, one realizes at once what a tremendous influence was exercised upon him by the life and example of his mother. She was a pious woman, greatly devoted to her husband and her children; but a large part of her time was devoted to worship in temples and religious austerities. In his *Autobiography* Gandhiji describes both the character of his father as well as of his mother. One notices with what reverence and devotion he regarded his father; there seems to have been a distance, however, between the two. But when it comes to his mother, we are impressed at once by the love and admiration which he had for his mother. And what perhaps influenced Gandhiji most in the character of his mother was the high moral purity, and the love for austerity which stood out as a prominent element in her life and character. Here was one who had undergone many penances, many religious observances which called for the denial of numerous physical pleasures. She had devoted herself to the service of God; but had not lost thereby the sweetest elements of her womanly nature and her love for mankind.

It was perhaps this aspect of his mother's life, a dedication to what she held to be her highest duty, and her utter, crystal-like purity of moral character, which had an abiding influence upon Gandhiji. This was not merely true of the formative period of his life, but it remained as a pervasive influence, or formed the very foundation of his moral nature, all through his life.

In his *Autobiography*, he writes in detail about his relationship with his wife, Kasturba; but one feels that in spite of the long companionship as husband and wife between the two, the position which Kasturba eventually came to occupy in his life, was very nearly once more that of the mother whom he had lost earlier in life.

It was only at a comparatively later stage in his public career that we find Gandhiji deeply exercised over the question of relationship between men and women. When the satyagraha began in South Africa against racial discrimination, Gandhiji naturally came into deep contact with a large number of men and women, who had come from many walks of life, and many of whom did not have the advantage of much formal education. They had all to be trained and organized so that they could offer non-violent resistance against the wrongs thrust upon them by a government which was primarily interested in preserving the superior interests of the White population.

According to Gandhiji's own views, the resistance to apartheid was not going to be limited to a mere securing of a few political rights; it was to be an opportunity and occasion for building up a completely new order of life, which would be free from the inequalities and injustices prevailing at present. With this end in view, Gandhiji established the Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm, in order to prepare the Indian community in South Africa for a new kind of life altogether. Gandhiji was deeply inspired in those days by Ruskin's writings on equality, and by Tolstoy's book entitled *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. And he took both of these books in a very serious manner. For him, an acceptance of Tolstoy's or Ruskin's teaching was not only to be an acceptance at the level of the mind, but it was to lead to a full-scale reordering of one's personal, as well as social commitments.

It was during this organization of an austere kind of life of the satyagrahis in South Africa, when he wanted them to go through a spartan discipline in moral living,

that he was faced by problems which related once more to the relationship between man and woman in society. In course of this spartan adventure, Gandhiji developed some of his ideas on subjects like vegetarianism, *brahmacharya* and so on.

While organizing the Indian men and women for satyagraha in South Africa, Gandhiji soon came to hold the view that one could devote oneself utterly to the service of the community only if one could enfranchise oneself from the bondage of self. And the deepest roots of this bondage lay in the primal instinct which lies buried in the being of man. And it was thus that he came to develop the idea that unless one became completely emancipated from the call of sex, one could not become perfect in one's pursuit of a higher purpose in life.

This was the reason why, even in South Africa, he recommended to the satyagrahis that they must observe the vow of continence or *brahmacharya*, no matter whether they were married or unmarried. Gandhiji did not look upon the relationship between men and women as anything whose roots did not ultimately go down to sex. In this he was perhaps wrong. Yet he pursued this idea in both personal and social life with the devotion of our mediaeval saints.

Mrs. Millie Graham Polak was an English woman who joined him with her husband Henry Polak in his work in South Africa. Mrs. Polak was a sensitive and highly cultured lady, and in a small article entitled "Gandhiji and Women", she has recounted some of her own experiences and assessment of Gandhiji's character. This was published in a book entitled *Gandhiji as We Know Him*, edited by Chandrashanker Shukla. In it she wrote:

Another of the many pictures of life in South Africa arises clearly in my mind. It was during the early years of life in Phoenix. Mahatmaji had at this time come to definite conclusions about sex-abstinence. He had written and spoken on the subject very

decisively. I had several discussions with him about the continuance of human life on this planet, and had, on one occasion, remarked that he must surely consider that God was wrong in having created men and women with their senses and emotions, since, were they to accept and adopt Mahatmaji's dictum, then God's expression through creation would cease; self-control, I contended, being the goal of developed humanity and not the denial of God's method of peopling the world. Very soon after this conversation, one of the members of the little settlement at Phoenix gave birth to a child. I purposely refrained from speaking of the matter when I visited Phoenix two or three days later. I thought that perhaps Mahatmaji might feel the fact displeasing. After a short while, and having talked of other things, he said in a surprised voice, "You have not asked about the mother and babe. Do you not want to see them?" He then came with me to see the baby and talked in a quiet, joyous way to the mother; and I realized in a flash that, even as a woman does, he differentiated between abstract principles and human needs and affections.

You will appreciate that this is a remarkable story, and it also shows the way in which Gandhiji looked upon the common and native sentiments of the human individual with a tenderness which is significantly like that of a woman.

One of the great problems with which Gandhiji was faced in his personal life was the attitude that he should develop in relation to the numerous women who came in contact with him in course of his public life. And in course of his search for a solution in this respect, Gandhiji landed himself upon an attitude which is psychologically of very great interest. Like Tolstoy, he confessed that he noticed the stirrings of the primal instinct within him; and this was a temptation when he was drawn away from his vow of service to humanity on to an attachment to the self. Sex, even in its most attenuated form, had therefore to be suppressed so that one could be freed to serve humanity. And in this adventure, Gandhiji developed an idea which, as I have said, was of a most interesting kind.

He wanted to *become* a woman, a mother, so that women would no longer have a sexual attraction for him, even of the most attenuated kind. In the spiritual exercises of saints, this kind of practice is not wholly unknown. We can recall the practice of Shree Ramakrishna, who in one stage of his spiritual adventure *became* like a woman. So much so that it is even related that blood would ooze out of the pores of his skin as happens periodically in the case of womankind. This is comparable to the example of several mediaeval European saints who suffered from stigmata when their identification with Jesus Christ in his last mortal suffering became intense and perfect.

In the case of Gandhiji we do not think that such an identification, i.e. the attempt to become a mother unto those who came in contact with him, ever became as perfect as in the case of the mediaeval saints or of Shree Ramakrishna. But he did attain to great heights when the tenderness which he exercised on men soothed them, and lifted them above their sorrows. But the fact that he, for ever, wanted to examine all the time if his practice of *brahmacharya* had become perfect, is itself proof that he preserved a questioning attitude about his own perfection to the end of his life. It was one of his practices to ask those women who had come close to him in public or personal life if they felt anything about him except that he was as a mother to them. And it is this questioning, this residual doubt about himself which distinguishes him from the saints whom we have named above.

Perhaps it was also this lingering imperfection which brought him nearer to ordinary men and women much more closely than to spiritually supreme souls like Shree Ramakrishna or the Christian saints. By their very perfection, the latter became distant from ordinary mortals; while Gandhiji, with his doubts about himself and consciousness of his own weakness (whatever they were), did not cut the bridge which tied him to the world of ordinary mortals.

Gandhiji's daily life was not merely spent in the pursuit of a high ideal, but a large part of it was expended in the ministration to the wants of very ordinary human beings. Once upon a time, a young man wrote to him a letter asking for his intervention on his behalf with his father. The young man had fallen in love with a girl, and the father was unwilling because it was perhaps a case of inter-caste marriage. Gandhiji read the letter with care, advised the son to leave the shelter of his father, work independently as a common labourer for at least two years, and then wrote, "If your love survives this experiment, you will have all my blessings." When I asked him later on as to why he had cared to send a reply to this letter Gandhiji said to me, "What else should I have said to this young man? He has lost his way in the woods of life, or perhaps he has caught a thorn in his foot from which he was suffering. It would have been no use to talk to him about the sorrows of others, of how he could dedicate himself to what you may describe as a noble cause. If I spent a few minutes of my time and showed him a way out of the woods, that would be the only service which I could render to this young man."

With what tenderness he regarded the sorrows of those who came to him for solace! I remember the case of a man who came to see him one day in Noakhali. With great hesitation he approached for permission to interview, and said that he was not sure if he should at all see the Mahatma with a personal problem of his own. He was a patient suffering from rheumatism, and had heard that Gandhiji knew nature-cure methods for the treatment of diseases. Of course, the interview was arranged; and when after nearly more than half an hour the gentleman came out of Gandhiji's room, he had tears in his eyes, and said, "I could never imagine that any man could ever take so much interest in my suffering." And he had come out with a long prescription of what he should eat, what kind of bath he should take, and so on.

It was this extreme tenderness with which he regarded each individual, which made them feel that he was ever so close to them in their hearts, and this also led them to try their uttermost so that they could rise as high as his expectations.

To the end of his life Gandhiji remained in this fashion close to the needs of everyone who needed his help. This daily ministration was his pilgrimage to the shores of the ocean of human sorrow and suffering. That kept him spiritually alive, tied down to the earth. And that endeavour to be a mother to all, to perfect himself so that he would be freed from all temptation to seek his own happiness even in the subtlest manner, so that he would become a fit instrument for total dedication to the service of toiling and suffering humanity, was in a way the supreme form of worship which he could offer to womankind, and through them to his Mother.

II

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday I tried to describe the influence which womankind in general had exercised on the life and character of Mahatma Gandhi. I propose this evening to deal with another aspect of Gandhiji's life and work, namely, his social activities, and how far these were influenced by his attitude towards womankind.

Among all the problems which face the contemporary world, Gandhiji looked upon the problem of war as the most important one. He held that unless we were able to evolve some method of bringing about social change by some means other than war, the prospects were bleak indeed for the entire human race. Many political thinkers have tried to find out constitutional means which would satisfactorily bring about a settlement of disputes. There have been proposals to build up a world court, or even one single government which will try to settle disputes between

the nation-states of today. Some eminent political philosophers and jurists have also tried to educate mankind so that they may eventually realize that, unless they take recourse to some such means as the above, the entire human race may be destroyed one day, as the instruments of war which have been invented in modern times are capable of the most appalling measure of destruction.

Gandhiji subscribed to the idea described above. But if constitutional means failed, what should be our duty? Should we carry on our endeavour to build up One World by such means, and in the meantime allow nations to settle their disputes with the help of armaments, as the next best course?

Gandhiji realized very clearly that war was a very effective means of settling disputes. But his criticism of war was two-fold. Firstly, it often brought about results very different from those which were originally aimed at. Secondly, in a victorious war, power eventually gravitates into the hands of a minority which actually is in command of the instruments of warfare. When these instruments become more and more sophisticated, power begins to concentrate into the hands of a progressively smaller number of men.

It is true that in very recent times, guerilla tactics have extensively replaced the orthodox methods of positional warfare. And one may claim that in such warfare, power does not become concentrated in the hands of the few, but is widely shared by the populace. Even if this is admitted, as it should be, yet this does not invalidate the criticism which Gandhiji levelled against the potential concentration of power under violence. For, even when guerilla tactics are widely employed, the organization and direction of resistance is quite often in the hands of a highly organized political party, which exercises centralized control.

In any case, Gandhiji did not believe very much that power in warfare could ever be shared widely by the

populace. They would have to be either directly or indirectly aligned to some Party, Nation or State which, in itself, would assist the guerilla fighters through various means.

As a matter of fact, when, in 1946, the British Government first made an offer that they were going to quit India, and that Indians should now frame their own Constitution through the Constituent Assembly, Gandhiji sent a rather extraordinary letter to the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress. In that letter, he said that the Constituent Assembly was coming, not because of India's organized strength, but on account of other historical reasons. If the Congress could not come to terms with the Muslim League, but accepted the Constituent Assembly in spite of the latter's boycott, and with the willing co-operation of the (British) Government, "it would be under the visible or invisible protection of the British forces whether Indian or European." "In my opinion," he wrote, "we shall never reach a satisfactory Constitution under these circumstances. Whether we own it or not, our weakness will be felt by the whole world." In other words, if power came to India even through constitutional means, it was likely to come to a class rather than to the people in general. The least and last among men would still have to live by reliance upon other peoples' strength for the defence of what they themselves held to be precious.

This was also the reason why even in 1909 Gandhiji said to a revolutionist that he was not interested in Indian freedom if it meant that India was merely to be ruled by Indians rather than by Englishmen. He wrote on that occasion: "I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing; how can the millions obtain self-rule?"

It was to this task eventually that Gandhiji addressed himself in his political activities. He recognized the

limitations of war as well as of constitutional methods. And therefore he tried to devise a method through which even the physically least numerous or the weakest could vindicate their cause if the latter were just. While describing how he came to invent this new method of organized resistance, Gandhiji wrote in 1931:

Up to the year 1906, I simply relied on appeal to reason. I was a very industrious reformer. I was a good draftsman, as I always had a close grip of facts which in its turn was the necessary result of my meticulous regard for truth. But I found that reason failed to produce an impression when the critical moment arrived in South Africa. My people were excited: even a worm will and does sometimes turn—and there was talk of wreaking vengeance. I had then to choose between allying myself to violence or finding out some other method of meeting the crisis and stopping the rot and it came to me that we should refuse to obey legislation that was degrading, and let them put us in jail if they liked. Thus came into being the moral equivalent of war. . . the conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason. Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I and I have come to the fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. (*Young India*, 5 November 1931, p. 341)

This was how satyagraha and massive civil disobedience came into being. Its central purpose is to overwhelm the so-called opponent by the courage and determination with which the satyagrahi holds on steadfastly to a just cause. It is undoubtedly a form of direct action, and Gandhiji recognized it to be so. On one occasion, he actually said, "I am essentially a non-violent man, and I believe in war bereft of every trace of violence." (*Harijan*, 14 May 1938, p. 115) And yet it is interesting and important that in spite of the close similarity in some respects between the two forms of direct action, namely, war and satyagraha, Gandhiji claimed that satyagraha was one of the constitutional rights of a citizen in a civilized society. Of course, recourse to it is justified only after the normal legal, or democratic political methods have been tried and exhausted. But even then, Gandhiji's view was that the right of *civil* disobedience lay within the constitutional rights of a citizen.

Even as early as 1920, he wrote with reference to the method of non-violent non-co-operation:

I hold that no repression could have prevented a violent eruption if the people had not had presented to them a form of direct action involving considerable sacrifice and ensuring success if such direct action was largely taken up by the public. Non-co-operation was the only dignified and constitutional form of such direct action. For it is the right recognized from time immemorial of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules. (*Young India*, 30 June 1920, quoted in *Selections from Gandhi*, 1968, p. 123.)

What we have described so far is only satyagraha and the *right* of a citizen to exercise it. But there is another aspect, namely, the *duty* of the citizen who decides to employ this means of direct action.

Gandhiji showed an originality in regard to this question which deserves to be carefully analysed. While leading the Congress's campaign for political freedom

in India, Gandhiji unceasingly reminded the people of India that the latter were as much responsible for their loss of independence as the masters who ruled over them. Every system of exploitation or of social subservience exists because both the exploiters and exploited 'co-operate' in its maintenance. The former do so through organized strength in order to satisfy their greed and love of power, while the latter do so through fear and lack of organization, or because some among them try to pick up the crumbs of power which are thrown to them by the ruling class.

If one has to qualify for satyagraha, the first step which is necessary is, therefore, to set one's own house in order. Non-violence is useless for the defence of all 'ill-gotten gains'. If one wishes to employ this method, the preparation should consist of an attempt to get rid of exploitation in one's own home-area.

When that is done, or as one proceeds in this endeavour while he carries on his struggle with the opposing forces by means of non-violence, he has to keep another thing in mind. The satyagrahi's aim is to convert his opponent so that he sees the justice of the former's cause. And when this conversion is achieved, both of those who were formerly opponents, they begin to act in a manner when justice becomes their supreme aim, and a new institution is built up in place of the old by means of their joint endeavour.

The institution, which one aims at destroying through replacement by a better one, should be clearly distinguished from the individuals who have been personally responsible for its maintenance. Gandhiji held firmly that every community, and even every human being, is capable of *conversion* under the influence of non-violent non-cooperation. So much so that he once wrote in poetic language:

When I was a little child, there used to be two blind performers in Rajkot. One of them was a musician. When he played on his instrument, his fingers swept the strings with an unerring instinct and every-

body listened spell-bound to his playing. Similarly there are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music. (*Harijan*, 27 May 1939, p. 136)

It was with such an aim, and also hope, that Gandhiji recommended non-violent, non-co-operation to the people of India. They had to qualify for wresting power from the upholders of the British Empire. And in this endeavour they were to work in a way that the British rulers themselves would be converted to the satyagrahis' point of view. But in order to qualify themselves the satyagrahis had to go through a continuous process of 'constructive' activity. War certainly unites people quickly; but what he wanted more was that men should be united also in peace, in the constructive endeavour to build up a new society which is free from the weaknesses of the present.

It is true that such a new society cannot be built up unless power is finally transferred from one class of men to another. But Gandhiji never thought that power had *first* to be so transferred, and then only the work of reconstruction should begin. Instead of that, he held that, once our mind was set on a new kind of equalitarian society, we should start building up its model with *whatever resources we could marshal* at any given point of time. And thus he recommended that we should ply the spinning wheel if we wanted to meet the needs of clothing people. We should bring work to the homes of those who lived in villages, rather than wait for the day when, through widespread modern industries, we could give work to every one.

While explaining his attitude towards machinery to an interviewer in 1924, he said:

What I object to is the *craze* for machinery, not machinery as such. The *craze* is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour', till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I

want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might. (*Young India*, 13 November 1924, p. 378)

Earlier, in 1921, while re-introducing the spinning wheel during the Non-co-operation Movement, he said:

The only question . . . that a lover of India and humanity has to address himself to is how best to devise practical means of alleviating India's wretchedness and misery. No scheme of irrigation or other agricultural improvement that human ingenuity can conceive can deal with the vastly scattered population of India or provide work for masses of mankind who are constantly thrown out of employment. Imagine a nation working only five hours a day on an average, and this not by choice but by force of circumstances, and you have a realistic picture of India. (*Young India*, 3 November 1921, p. 350)

It was this concern for the poorest, for one who had to be once more restored to human dignity, that Gandhiji placed so much emphasis upon the Constructive Programme. The highest moral duty of every citizen of India was to find work for all his fellow-men, and share with them the toil of creating food and raiment for everybody. In this endeavour, Gandhiji raised Work into a high moral level. So much so that he said on several occasions that bread and the opportunity of honourable employment were as God to starving human beings. Two passages are quoted below from his writings of 1931 and 1921 in order to illustrate this:

Imagine, therefore, what a calamity it must be to have 300 millions unemployed, several millions becoming degraded every day for want of employment, devoid of self-respect, devoid of faith in God. I

may as well place before the dog over there the message of God as before those hungry millions who have no lustre in their eyes and whose only God is their bread. I can take before them a message of God only by taking the message of sacred work before them. It is good enough to talk of God whilst we are sitting here after a nice breakfast and looking forward to a nicer luncheon, but how am I to talk of God to the millions who have to go without two meals a day? To them God can only appear as bread and butter. (*Young India*, 15 October 1931, p. 310)

To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. (*Young India*, 13 October 1921, p. 325)

The point which I have been trying to develop is that the image which Gandhiji built up in India, perhaps without being very much aware of it, was not that of a warrior on horseback who led his countrymen on to battle and to victory. Such an image occasionally arose as he stood at the head of a campaign of civil disobedience, whether it was in 1921 or in 1930. The image which actually formed about him resembled more closely that of a woman who devoted her whole mind and attention to setting her own house in order in the very best manner possible. Even during the campaigns of satyagraha, Gandhiji's courage resembled that of a patient, all-forgiving mother, who would steadfastly hold on to her principles, but would not be tempted to forsake her love of mankind even if some of them wronged her grievously.

This image of Gandhiji was realized much more readily by those who did not belong to India but to other lands. While Gandhiji was on his way to attend the Round Table Conference in London in 1931, an interesting thing happened as he landed at the Port of Marseilles. It is reported that someone in the crowd threw a woman's garment at him as a present. This must have been from someone who

prided himself in his masculine bravery and detested the woman-like attitude of Gandhiji even in his movements of civil resistance. It is also reported, if I remember aright, that Gandhiji appreciated this present very highly, instead of being put down by it.

The solicitude with which Gandhiji tried to enlist women in his band of civil resisters was indeed very great. During the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, when liquor shops had to be 'picketed' as part of the campaign, Gandhiji issued special instructions that this work should be particularly entrusted to women. There were several obvious reasons for such a choice. Firstly, women suffered most from the intemperance of their menfolk; and so they would be the party most interested in a campaign of prohibition. Secondly, women had so long not participated on any large scale in public life in India; and this was an opportunity when they could be weaned from their *pardah* and brought into the forefront to share in the campaign with their husbands and brothers. Thirdly, this was perhaps the secret or unspoken reason, he thought that the kind of courage which is needed in satyagraha comes more naturally and more readily to women rather than to men.

Indeed, the call which Gandhiji gave to the women of India was of such a nature that they responded in a manner which they had never done before. His civil disobedience campaigns brought about, in a dramatic manner, the entry of women in larger numbers into the public life of India. These became the starting points of women's emancipation in our land.

We shall close at this point after making one important observation. Human civilization has progressed very far in the course of centuries. But Gandhiji held that in this evolution, it has always been men who have played a dominant role. The qualities which mark off men from women have received more encouragement than otherwise. Courage and adventure, the spirit of fighting, and also the impatience which comes to a man who holds that he is in

the right rather than his opponent—in other words, the vanity that Truth and Justice are all on one's side, and one must lay down one's life in its vindication—are all qualities which are distinctive of the fighting Male. Gandhiji's firm belief was that the apotheosis of the qualities of pugnacity and ceaseless adventure had undoubtedly carried men a long way on the path of civilization. But mankind had arrived in course of that endeavour at a point where, in this atomic age, they had almost come to the brink of suicide and utter destruction of the human race. And from this predicament, there was one set of qualities which could alone rescue mankind from potential destruction. It was the quality of patience, understanding and a quiet, but unshakable courage, of which he held womankind to be naturally the best representatives. In other words, in his opinion, women had now to play a new role in the re-making of human civilization.

In the last analysis, therefore, Gandhiji's greatest contribution to modern civilization was an attempt to introduce into it those qualities which women represented best, and which had so long never been allowed to exercise their due influence. The regeneration of mankind could only come through the apotheosis of the Mother, and all that she represented.

This was the greatest tribute that Gandhiji could ever pay to womankind; and in course of our discussion, I have tried to present how the worship of Woman arose in his private life, and how eventually spilled over and deeply coloured the entire course of his public life, whether in the field of thought or of action.

HOW GANDHIJI WORKED*

In the introductory address, Professor Niharranjan Ray has presented to us a comprehensive account of Gandhiji's contribution to Indian political and social thought during the last fifty years. My task has therefore become easy; and I shall confine myself briefly to the manner in which Gandhiji put his ideas into actual execution. I shall try to do so by recounting a few incidents observed by me in course of my brief, but very fruitful, experience during one of the most critical periods of modern Indian history. These will mostly relate to the period when Gandhiji was involved in trying to find a solution of the communal problem in our country during the years 1946 and 1947. But I shall begin with a small incident which goes back to the year 1934.

My first interview with Gandhiji in Wardha took place in that year. The questions discussed related to his theory of trusteeship, the ways of organizing the peasantry for combat, and so on. On the first afternoon it was not possible for Gandhiji to cover all the questions. After the initial discussion, it was time for him to go out on his everyday walk, and I was privileged to join him and his party in it.

Gandhiji walked briskly; and among others who accompanied him was the celebrated leader of the Pathans, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. When the mile of walk across the rough, stony ground was over, all of us turned back; and what interested me was that everybody collected as many small or large pieces of rock as he could carry in his *chaddar*. I also did the same, and when we returned to

*Inaugural Address at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla Gandhi Seminar, 13 October 1968. Reprinted with the kind permission of the Registrar.

the house where Gandhiji stayed, through the back-yard, we deposited the stones in a heap which had already grown there, perhaps after weeks or months of daily walks. Khan Saheb told me later on that these were meant for building a small road which was to connect the house with the pucca road which lay a few hundred yards away.

To my mind, this was not economical. If a road needed to be built, and materials had to be collected, it could be done much more expeditiously by raising subscriptions, or by a more concentrated effort than by collecting materials, bit by bit, over weeks and months. When this question was put to Gandhiji on my behalf by Khan Saheb the reply or explanation came that Gandhiji was, firstly, not merely interested in his daily morning and afternoon exercise for the sake of health, but he also wanted to add to it some *useful* work. Secondly, if the road needed to be built, what he desired was that everyone who needed it should also *be involved* in its making. It was not enough to have the road built anyhow; he wanted to use this also as a *means of education*. Perhaps, in Gandhiji's mind, the epic story of how the squirrels brought in their grains of sand when a bridge had to be built across the ocean when Rama planned to invade Lanka of Ravana must also have occurred. And so he wanted every citizen of India to be similarly involved in the making of a road, or whatever it was, no matter how small his contribution was going to be.

This was my first direct experience of how Gandhiji worked, and how also he wanted us to work; and this also helped me to understand many things in his programme of work, as I tried to study them later on.

The second incident which I shall relate today is connected with his days in Noakhali at the end of 1946. He had gone there, as he said, not to bring consolation to those who had suffered grievously from riots, but to give them courage so that they could build up their lives anew.

In order to bring peace on the land, and also in order to build up new organizations which would supplement

the work of the Government, peace committees were being set up in those days by the Government itself. Representatives of both the communities, Hindu and Muslim, were to sit and work together in these committees. The task set before them was that they should try to bring back the refugee Hindus to the villages, help in their rehabilitation, and also assist the police in discovering the culprits so that they might be punished.

It was in this connexion that a deputation of Hindu leaders came to consult Gandhiji. At this point, please allow me to quote rather extensively from a book of mine entitled *My Days with Gandhiji* (1953, pp. 60-62). I shall do so with some hesitation, but one needs to be extremely careful and accurate when reporting Gandhiji.

A batch of Hindu political workers of the district . . . had come to discuss certain demands which had to be satisfied before the peace committees could, in their opinion, function effectively. Gandhiji listened carefully . . . and then said, "Your proposal that these demands should be satisfied before the peace committees can be formed, virtually means a summary rejection of the peace offer. This will only succeed in embittering feelings still further. The Government offer should be accepted on grounds of expediency. I do not however plead for peace at any price, certainly not at the price of honour. Let us act on the square, and let us put them in the wrong. It was exactly in this way that Indians were able to gain the silent sympathy of a large number of Europeans in South Africa. If, after a fair trial, the committees are found unworkable, you can come out with your honour intact. That sense of honour will give you a courage which no man can beat."

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The demands were now examined one by one. In place of the demand that certain Muslim officers should be replaced by Hindu officers, Gandhiji remarked that it was unreasonable and a *communal* demand. "While putting forward such a proposal, you should ask yourself if the Muslims of Bihar can reasonably make a similar demand. In my opinion, the present demand is absurd and

I would personally never countenance it. You can, of course, substitute in its place, 'impartial officers in place of biassed ones', that would be fair."

* * *

Someone pointed out . . . that the Ministry in Bihar had employed Muslim armed soldiers to quell the disturbances, the suggestion being that this was for the appeasement of the Muslims. Gandhiji was clearly of opinion that such a thing, if true, was surely a sign of weakness.

The last point raised was in connection with the Hindu members of the peace committees. One member present pleaded for postponement, as most of the leading Hindus had left the district and only poor weavers, blacksmiths and farmers remained behind. If these were to be on the committees, they would be no match for the more intelligent and educated Mussulman representatives. Gandhiji said with some warmth that if many had fled, leaving neighbours to their own fate, they did not deserve to be called leaders. The seats would have to be occupied by barbers, washermen and the like, who were as much interested in the preservation of their life and property as the rich. It was not unlikely that they might submit to the influence of Muslim members. But the risk had to be run if true democracy was to be evolved. "In all preliminary steps in democracy, we have to run tremendous risks."

It was in this manner therefore that Gandhiji worked to build up the structure of democratic organizations from among the commonest and the lowliest of Indians.

The third incident which I shall try to narrate relates to Calcutta where Gandhiji was present at the time when power was being transferred by the British Government to Indian hands in August 1947. While Gandhiji set up his camp in a house belonging to a Muslim lady, in a district which was predominantly Hindu, he argued with a number of Hindu young men who eventually agreed to bring back home the other Muslims who had evacuated the place during the riots. The Hindus had also given word

that no harm would come to them if they returned.

But unfortunately on the 31st of August 1947, there was a turn for the worse in the city of Calcutta. Riots broke out once more in other parts of the city, and the frightened Muslims came to Gandhiji's camp and wanted him to make an arrangement so that they might be carried away to some place of safety. When this was actually being done, and an open truck in which the refugees were accommodated moved away from where Gandhiji stood in the middle of the road, two bombs were hurled on the truck and two men died. Gandhiji walked up to the place; arrangements were made for the transport of the survivors, and the dead bodies were duly removed.

At this point, I walked up to a crowd of Hindu young men who stood a few hundred yards away, and asked them why they had thus broken their plighted word to Gandhiji.

They were indeed sorry, and said that two of their company had not been convinced by Gandhiji's arguments, and it was they who had thrown the bombs from an empty house and then run away. But there were still some Muslims left in the *bustee*, and they would firstly not allow them to be evacuated any further, and secondly would protect them by means of such arms as they possessed. Their prayer to Gandhiji was that, if the police arrested them tonight for the possession of unlicensed arms, he must set them free.

It was a strange prayer; but when I went to Gandhiji and reported to him what the young men had said, without one moment's hesitation, he asked me to go and tell them that "he was with them. If the Chief Minister could not protect the minority with the Government forces, and the young men decided to do so, they deserved his support."

Later on, I asked Gandhiji why he had supported violence in this manner. His answer was that he could not recommend the non-violent way to others without demonstrating that it was a more effective remedy. He had deci-

ded to fast in order to bring back sanity to the citizens of Calcutta; in the meanwhile, he supported the young men in their moral act of protecting the weak.

Gandhiji then went on a fast in Calcutta on the first of September 1947, and in the statement which was issued, he said,

What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. . . . If the people of Calcutta wish me to proceed to the Punjab and help the people there, they have to enable me to break the fast as early as possible.

Three days passed by; the conscience of the citizens of Calcutta seems to have been stricken, and eventually the leaders among the citizens came to him and gave him word that they would do everything, and even risk their lives, if violence broke out again. It was only after this that Gandhiji broke his fast, and peace was once more restored to the city. As he used to say, good is always slow in action while evil is militant. All that he had done was to touch the hearts of those whom he loved, and who also loved him, and make them act, each in his own little sphere, to quell the violence that was raising its head.

My intention, Ladies and Gentlemen, has been to present to you the actual manner in which Gandhiji worked during his lifetime. We have seen how he paid the utmost attention to details; how his constant endeavour was to build up democracy even from the grass-roots, one in which the lowliest would be able to participate. I have also tried to present how he organized his non-violence, how he tried to keep violence in check by offering a better and more moral way of action. We have seen how he *understood* violence, knew its limitations, and when necessary staked his own life in keeping resistance and action within the bounds of non-violence.

If we recall today all the heritage which Gandhiji left to us, by a life devoted to ceaseless action and by a death

which set a martyr's seal upon that life, we shall indeed be blessed.

6

MAHATMA GANDHI'S LAST ADVICE*

Mahatma Gandhi looked upon the problem of war as the most important problem which faced the contemporary world. He believed that unless we were able to devise a method of collective action which would be more efficient than war in the resolution of conflicts, humanity would be involved in a race for armaments which might prove disastrous and suicidal in the end.

His chief criticism was that war frequently led to results different from those originally aimed at. Moreover, it tended to concentrate power in the hands of a few, who by that very act became isolated from the rest of those whom they originally represented. In other words, it led to the creation of a new class, the members of which tended to act as priests and interpreters in order to prove that they held power, though temporarily, only on behalf of the toiling millions.

It was in order to prevent this eventuality that Gandhiji took every possible measure in order to keep his movements within the bounds of non-violence. The steps which he recommended in non-violent resistance were to be progressive in character, so that the pitch of battle would rise higher and higher as the masses became better organized and more skilful in its operation.

In the course of nearly three decades of leadership in India, Gandhiji was directly or indirectly responsible for initiating or guiding or inspiring indirectly nearly forty

*Last lecture at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, during seminar on Gandhi, on 25 October 1968. Reprinted with the kind permission of the Registrar, I.I.A.S.

large or small movements for the redress of economic, social or political grievances. A systematic and critical study of these movements may help us in learning something about the technical aspects of the organization of non-violent resistance.

The economic plans of Gandhiji were an integral part of his preparation for leading the masses into power. It was a war-measure rather than a peace-time activity, designed merely for the sake of economic growth. With this end in view, he held that

the means of production of the elementary necessities of life (should) remain in the control of the masses.

These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others.

It is reasonable to expect that under a highly centralized organization of production, a community's standard of living can be raised to a high level. But if the central authority went wrong, and took recourse to action which was not in the best interest of the masses, it would still be possible for them to bend the latter to their will by withdrawing economic support.

It was in order to prevent this contingency again that Gandhiji recommended and worked for decentralization of the productive system as far as that was practicable. But he also held that in order to enrich life further, the decentralized units should engage in voluntary co-operation to the maximum, but necessary extent. And these circles of co-operation would and should cut across State-made frontiers. In case, however, such co-operation was used in the pursuit of wrong ends, the decentralized units could withdraw from forced co-operation and fall back upon their own limited resources for the satisfaction of their vital needs.

In other words, the masses were to preserve their independence and not barter it away for a purely mechanical, higher standard of living.

As a practical idealist recommending a democratic form of government for Free India, Gandhiji wrote as early as 1925:

By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled, *who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters.* I hope to demonstrate that *real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused.* In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.*

In regard to cultural, or as Gandhiji called it 'moral' freedom, Gandhiji held that religion was a completely personal affair, and it should not be allowed to interfere in the affairs of the State. In a secular State, no specifically sectarian custom or code of morals should be enforced upon the rest of the population by means of State-made laws. If the political and economic structure of India became unified, and if these were oriented towards the interests of the 'masses' instead of the 'classes', then men could be left free to profess their religious beliefs, or pursue their customs in freedom, provided they assured the same freedom to others also to do so.

It is natural that with greater inter-communication and economic co-operation, specifically local cultures will begin to come closer to one another; but this should be a natural process, never to be hastened by political pressure. Integration at the levels of economic and political life should be promoted much more than an artificial unity brought about at the linguistic and cultural levels.

In India today we have given to ourselves a Constitution which tries to guarantee equality and freedom to its

*Italics present author's.

citizens. But the economic and social framework which we have inherited from the past is far from that ideal. The pace at which the old is being transformed into the new leaves the under-privileged sections of the population in a state of discontent or frustration.

The most important task which lies before us is extensive political education of both the rural and urban folk. They have to be helped in organizing themselves so that they can enjoy the rights to which they are entitled. In this endeavour, they have to be made equally conscious of their duties, and helped in the endeavour to make proper use of all the aid which is offered to them by government departments, with which they will also co-operate through their own voluntary associations. The legal apparatus has also to be fully utilized for the preservation of their constitutional rights.

In this way, a beginning can be made in the task of building up new institutions, which will be like alternate sources of power, which will work in co-operation with the authority exercised by a representative government, and also keep it in check if it departs violently from the popular will.

Gandhiji personally believed that in this task, all political parties will have to take their due share. Three days before his death he prepared an instruction for the Indian National Congress in which he said,

The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not spectacular. All-embracing constructive work evokes the energy of all the units of the millions.

He then advised Congress workers and sympathisers to scatter themselves all over the country in order to serve the villagers in their own homes. His instruction was:

These servants will be expected to operate upon and serve the voters registered by law, in their own

surroundings. Many persons and parties will woo them. The very best will win. Thus and in no other way can the Congress regain its fast ebbing unique position in the country. . . . If it engages in the un-
gainly skirmish for power, it will find one fine morning that it is no more. Thank God it is no longer in sole possession of the field.

7

NON-VIOLENCE AND DEFENCE*

The most crucial question with regard to non-violence is the question of defence. Can a nation defend its possession against external aggression or even internal disruption by means of non-violence? Gandhiji had his own views regarding this question, and I shall try to present them in as brief a manner as possible.

The first point to remember is that Gandhiji was not a 'nationalist' in the usual sense of the term. He thought that the whole human family had a right to the wealth created anywhere in the earth by Nature. And if a human community developed that wealth by means of its own labours, even then the wealth had to be shared by it with the rest of the human family. They could act only as its 'trustees'. That is why, in 1925, he said in course of a speech:

I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that *the resources of my country might be utilized for the benefit of mankind*.† . . . A country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love therefore of nationalism, or my

*Speech at the Gandhi Seminar on 24 October 1968, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla. Reprinted with the kind permission of the Registrar.

†Italics present author's.

idea of nationalism, is that my country may become free, that if need be, the whole country may die, so that the human races may live.

He said again in 1931:

There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers.

This, as everyone will realize, is an ideal which is very far from the usual ideal of nationalism.

It was Gandhiji's belief moreover that every kind of possession could not be defended by means of non-violence. Anything gained by violence could be protected by violence alone. So, if a community wanted to protect its possessions by means of non-violence, it had to qualify itself by getting rid of all that had been acquired by means of violence, things which he described as 'ill-gotten gains'. And capitalism came under this category. So that a nation or a community had to divest itself voluntarily of such gains before it could hope to deal effectively with an aggressor who came to snatch away from it its non-violent possessions.

Once Gandhiji said that just as war of the ordinary kind needed adequate preparation of many kinds, so also adequate preparation was needed for defending a country under the scheme of non-violence. And this consisted of setting its own economic and social house in order. The non-violent aspirant had to start with transforming the social relations within his own community by means of constructive work and satyagraha, if his intention was to establish Swaraj, or real freedom of those who toiled in the fields or the workshops.

This then was the aim towards which a community has to strive to the best of its ability, and with the available resources at its command. Supposing however this aim is conceded, what form would the non-violent combat actually take, in case there was aggression from without or a threat of disruption from within?

War has been defined by one authority, at least, as a means of imposing the will of one community upon another by means of punishment. In contrast, one can define satyagraha as an instrument of heroic and intelligent self-suffering as the satyagrahi tries to resist what he considers to be un-moral and evil. His aim is to evoke respect for his courage in the heart of one who opposes him, and whose interest it is to perpetuate the system which is considered evil by the satyagrahi. Once his heart is touched, not through fear but through respect evoked by the satyagraha campaign, the door is thrown open for a dialogue between the opposing camps. The aim is eventually to come to a settlement, and build up a new institution based on justice through the co-operation of those who had so long been engaged in combat.

Gandhiji held that, during the period of preparation, the satyagrahi should also make it widely known how he was trying at home to build up a just society. He did not also look upon the wealth of his Nation-State as an exclusive possession, but something which had to be shared with other communities. Such educative propaganda, if we call it by that name, would give him a prestige and reputation both at home and abroad which would be of great value when the time came for the application of non-violence against armed aggression.

If such a reputation has been successfully built up, even to a small but appreciable extent, then, let us suppose, the act of aggression from outside begins. The first act of defence would, according to Gandhiji, lie in the confrontation of the invading army by a band of satyagrahis who would try to talk to the people on the other side, even allow themselves to be killed, but who would not lift even their little finger in order to hurt the so-called antagonist. The antagonist had to be won over by patience; he should be made to feel that *his* life was not ever in danger. Only, the satyagrahis were determined to put up with

any punishment for the defence of a way of life which they considered to be just and moral.

It was often argued against Gandhiji that, in modern warfare, such a self-sacrifice on the part of the satyagrahis would not even be noticed. Bombs might be hurled from the air; tanks might sweep over the satyagrahis; and their slaughter would be useless. Gandhiji held however that, after all, the armed forces would have to take possession of the land of the satyagrahis, even if it were to bend them down to slavery. And then would come the second step. The population must organize non-violent non-co-operation with the occupation-forces. There must be no scorched-earth policy; but the population must bravely confront the aggressor, talk to them, tell them that they were prepared to share whatever they had, if the soldiers were prepared to share in building up a new kind of life based on justice and equality which they had so long been trying to do. But the satyagrahis would never submit to their dictates, or work as their slaves.

It was Gandhiji's hope that the sacrifice of the first line of satyagrahis, of those who had lain down their lives while not resisting, would give a kind of courage to the survivors behind them, so that they would be able to continue their non-violent non-co-operation.

In time, the imagination of the occupational forces would be touched. They would begin to wonder at the quiet courage and determination of those who never threatened their lives, yet would not surrender, but carry on another way of life in which *all* men are treated as brothers.

The question was asked of Gandhiji, if he thought that such a form of non-violent resistance was at all humanly possible. He said it was. But he admitted that it required a quality of courage which was of a very high order. But his belief was that, unless humanity was prepared to adopt an extremely audacious measure of this kind, men

will be involved for ever in a race for armaments which would lead them to greater and greater moral degeneration.

Someone asked him again if it was possible for a satyagrahi to make an appeal to the heart of a man like Bachcha-i-sakao or Hitler. Gandhiji replied, that through bitter experience, he would admit that the heart of such a person might not after all be touched. But commanders of war do not act alone. They act through ordinary soldiers, who, as men, are no better and no worse than any of us. The satyagrahi's action will have an appeal for *them*. And the moment the latter begin to *think*, the spell of their commander's indoctrination would be broken, and the latter would become isolated. And this kind of isolation of the focal points of violence would be the maximum that he would dare to hope for under the present circumstances.

It was in this manner that Gandhiji planned to organize the defence of our non-violent possessions by means of satyagraha.

8

MY EXPERIENCES AS A GANDHIAN*

I

Although I had given up my studies temporarily during the latter stages of the Non-co-operation Movement in 1922, I was never attracted by politics, but had always felt that the pursuit of science was my only occupation. Gandhiji's leadership of the national movement, his singular courage had an attraction for men like us; but the way he seemed to reject technology and science, appeared to be strange and unimaginative. My own work of science

*Lectures delivered at the Sapru House under the auspices of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom on 28-29 January 1969.

kept me busy during the years 1922 to 1929. Even before that, I had begun to realize the poverty of our villages through voluntary service in famines. But as I travelled more and more in the villages of the tribal people in Bihar, Orissa and several other provinces, I began to realize that the pursuit of an intellectual life became like a luxury if it had nothing to do with the relief of the miserable condition in which the majority of India's rural population lived.

In the year 1930, I had joined the University of Calcutta as a research scholar in anthropology; and it was in the same year that the Civil Disobedience Movement was started by Gandhiji. During the Salt Movement, an organization was set up in Bengal in which Babu Satish Chandra Dasgupta of the Khadi Pratisthan played an important part. Many of my friends became associated with this movement, and I also felt drawn towards it. The office was situated near the University of Calcutta. I resigned from my post of research scholar, when I was placed in charge of the publicity section of the Salt Movement in Bengal.

Within a short time, the office was raided and closed by the police. Some of us, who had accidentally not been arrested during the raid, collected ourselves and formed a plan of our own. At that time, the salt law was being broken in a large number of places in the district of Midnapore. We decided that instead of merely offering civil disobedience in or near Calcutta, we would rather go to some provincial town and walk on foot to Midnapore where satyagraha could be offered. So three of us chose the district of Birbhum. Our intention was to walk all the way from this district through Burdwan, Hooghly or Bankura until we reached Midnapore.

But when we reached Bolpur, and addressed a few meetings in the town and neighbouring villages, all of us felt that there was so little of political information and

organization in this part of the country that it would perhaps be better for us to settle down there to conduct some form of Gandhian constructive activity. A small shop for the sale of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth or Khadi had already been established a month or so ago by a gentleman who was a school master, but who was also a devoted Gandhian. He had spent some time, even before the Civil Disobedience Movement, in Gandhiji's company in Sabarmati. And we chose this Khadi Sangh as the centre of our constructive activities. Bolpur was a small town, or rather a big village in those days, and the quarter where the Khadi Sangh was located was one where landless labourers, mostly belonging to the 'lower' castes lived. So our work began.

Personally, I was not interested in the sale of Khadi or of spinning-wheels. During the height of the Civil Disobedience Movement, many people came to buy spinning-wheels and ready-made slivers of cotton, and produced fairly good yarn which could be woven into cloth. But as we became involved in the sale of Khadi, my personal feeling was that it was wrong to import spinning-wheels from outside, or even the steel spindle from some other place, cotton from a third, and then send the yarn by railway train to distant places to be woven into Khadi. This was certainly not 'decentralization' as we had understood it from Gandhiji's writings. So we decided to find carpenters and blacksmiths to produce spinning-wheels locally; and then to get the yarn woven by local weavers, of whom there were many in the neighbouring villages.

We worked hard month after month until all the technical aspects of the production of Khadi were properly learnt by us. We did succeed in the manufacture of good wheels and spindles, and also eventually the production of various grades of Khadi with the help of local artisans. By the time this was over, the number of spinners whom we served had already gone up to hundreds. Good yarn and good Khadi began to be produced. But my personal

experience was that this was done more because of sentiment than because it was profitable. So we set about a new experiment in the field of economics, if we may use that term.

Among the hundreds of spinners with whom we were in constant contact, there were men and women of all kinds. We chose a few among them from different walks of life. Two were coolies working in a coal depot near the railway station. They weighed coal for customers and carried them in head-loads or in push carts for delivery. There was also a confectioner who was not so hard worked. He prepared his confectionery for sale in the morning, and then sold it throughout the day. On market days, twice a week, there were many customers and he had a brisk sale. But on other days, he had some amount of time when he could spin. The fourth spinner was a shopkeeper who sold hardware. He sat in his shop all through the day, and could spin all the time if he did not have to attend any customer at the moment.

The autumnal festival, called Durga Pooja, was about three months away; and that is also the time when men buy new clothes for their children or for themselves. We of the Khadi Sangh appealed to these four friends of ours not to waste a single minute, but produce as much yarn as they could during the coming three months. We would exchange it for an equivalent weight of woven Khadi, and charge the cost of weaving it in cash in addition. The experiment was very fruitful. The two coolies in the coal-yard produced yarn enough for one piece of *dhoti* each, 4 yards by 44 inches. The confectioner produced four pieces of cloth altogether, while the hardware merchant, Sarkar Mahasaya, produced enough for 13 pieces of *dhoti*, *sari* and the like in three months' time.

This proved to our satisfaction that if the idle moments are converted to work, even the cooly in the coal-shop could produce, perhaps, four pieces of *dhoti* every year. Of course, the unremitting work which all of these spinners put

in was extraordinary. Even if half of the labour was thus employed, we felt that no family in Bolpur or the surrounding villages would have to purchase any cloth for his family at all. He had enough spare time, and spinning was quite pleasant if the wheels were kept in perfect order, and the cotton carded properly. Of course, the Khadi Sangh took charge of this part of the job, and we thus made a successful experiment.

As the tale of these experiments went round the villages, a strange thing began to happen. Slowly the demand for more work, and also for wages for spinning in cash began to mount. But we stubbornly refused to pay wages in cash. We encouraged the new set of poor spinners who began to arise in the villages to spin for their own cloth. But many of them, particularly women of the poorer but respectable families who were in *pardah*, had no money to buy either the wheel or the slivers. So the wheels were given to them and the payment spread over a year. The wheels we made cost no more than three rupees. With regard to cotton, our arrangement was that we would advance slivers, say, one seer in weight; and the spinner had to bring back to us half-a-seer, or seven or six *chhataks*, according to whether it was medium or fine yarn. Later on, when the spinner had thus accumulated, say, two seers of yarn of her own, she could send it to the Khadi Sangh and receive one seer by weight of woven Khadi, the difference going to pay for the cost of weaving.

When the poorer spinners realized in this way that, without the investment of a single pice, they could spin and receive pieces of cloth, enough for their use, by only *working*, the pressure on the Khadi Sangh began to mount very high. All the money we had invested in buying cotton and in payment to the weavers thus came back to us in piles and piles of well-spun yarn. A new way had to be found for converting this back into cash, so that we could buy cotton once more, or pay the weavers in cash. Fortunately, as this was Bolpur and Santiniketan was

near by, it became very easy for us to produce coarse or medium Khadi, towels and bedsheets, shirtings or *dhotis*, all of which were generously and eagerly purchased by the students and teachers of Santiniketan.

Clearly this experiment taught us that even with our existing resources it was possible to bring work to at least the poorest section of our people which would eventually help them to produce all the cloth which they needed. There was however one element, the cost of which had not been counted. It was the service of the Khadi Sangh itself which had not been paid for. But our experience was definitely this, that once the whole organization began to run smoothly, it should be possible to multiply it all over Birbhum District, and with a very small number of dedicated workers, it would be possible to keep the industry running.

The question of initial capital had been solved in an original way. There is a custom among the rice-merchants of Bolpur according to which, on every transaction, a few pice per rupee is charged for public services. Generally this fund, called *Iswar-vritti*, is set apart by every trader and used at the end of the year in some festivity like the Durga or Kali Pooja. Our initial funds had been gathered by collecting a part of the *Iswar-vritti* from the merchants of the town.

Unfortunately, when our experiments began to prosper in this manner, the Civil Disobedience Movement started again in 1932; the workers were snatched away by the police and found themselves in gaol, in quite another kind of environment. Personally for me, gaol came as an interruption. But there was also an advantage. There I came across a very large number of political workers from all over Bengal. A small fraction among them had experience of Gandhian constructive work; but the majority were people whose central passion was political work for India's independence. And it was then that I began to realize that Gandhiji's ideas, whether in the field

of economics or even of politics, had hardly reached them. It was as if the Civil Disobedience Movement in which all of them had participated was being carried out in a kind of intellectual vacuum. Among those who were in gaol, a substantial portion were Leftists, Socialists or Marxists. Some amount of Leftist literature was also available which was read with enthusiasm. But Gandhism did not seem to have an intellectual appeal; there was not much to read in it; nothing systematic. So it was left intellectually unsupported.

It was at this point that my intention was to do something which suited my temperament as much as the production of Khadi had been. And I decided to devote myself to reading the writings of Gandhiji, and present the result to political workers to the best of my ability. From that period in about 1933 onwards, this has been one of my chief interests to read carefully, examine with diligence how and why Gandhiji developed certain ideas; and also modified them, and then present the results in the form of lectures or of books. For several years I wrote mostly in Bengali; occasionally in English. The results were obviously negligible. But it gave me a satisfaction which could not be derived in any other way.

Meanwhile, the small centre of constructive work which had been established in 1930, was kept alive by the devoted work of some workers and sympathisers in Bolpur town. The production of Khadi however went down; and was eventually closed. Those who were part-time helpers found it impossible to continue the work even by means of their joint labours. The whole-time workers who had taken our place found education a more satisfactory job. Thus the Khadi Sangh became converted into the *Sikshagar*, a centre of primary and also adult education by means of evening classes. It also became a kind of political and civic club for the neighbourhood.

Even the *Sikshagar* has had to go through many ups and downs in course of the last thirty years and more.

Sometimes, it was developed as a women's industrial centre in addition to the primary and adult classes which are run in it. Sometimes, it became a centre of *ambar charkhas*. But all these ancillaries have dropped out, one by one, for lack of a determined social worker who has the capacity and energy to see it through. But the school still remains. And let me relate to you the fact that Gurudev's Sriniketan, that is, his school for village reconstruction has now taken charge of it and has been running it as a centre of their extension services.

Before I close, I shall relate to you another experiment, perhaps of a quixotic kind, which was conducted at the *Sikshagar* in Bolpur during the last ten years or so. There is some land which has become attached to the school through money donated by the public. This land can be irrigated from a well which belongs to the school, or from a tank which is the property of a small zemindar who lives near by. Once it was decided by the families who lived near the school that the land should be cultivated, and vegetables grown. The suggestion which one of them made was that they would all go to the zemindar, and seek his permission to use the water of his tank for irrigating the school's fields. In return, they would clean up the tank, raise fish, and give him half of the fish as rent.

When the time came for confronting the zemindar with this proposal, there was great enthusiasm and all the farmers and labourers became united. When the zemindar was approached, he said he would give no formal permission, but they could do what they liked. It was a kind of victory for the labourers, and they set about cultivating the garden with great enthusiasm.

But I had attached one condition to the use of the school land. The rent for the land payable to the owner continued to be paid by the school; and the labourers were to raise as much as they could on the land, provided (1) they first distributed among the families involved what every one of them needed, (2) and then, if a surplus was

left, it was to be sold, and a fund raised for medical or other assistance when necessary.

During the first year, when the memory of the united demand before the zemindar lasted, all went on well. But during the next, and the next year, enthusiasm began to flag, and the production of vegetables also progressively went down. One evening, when this question was raised by me in the evening assembly which sat regularly, our neighbours admitted that the production had become low. But then, one of them said, some have many members in their family and some have few. So those who have few, ask themselves, why should we work hard when the benefits will be enjoyed more by others? When I asked them, what should be done under these circumstances, almost everyone said, let us divide the land into separate plots, and then raise crops for our own sake rather than for others.

This was indeed done. But a new development took place in another three or four years' time. One of the neighbours, who was more energetic and also quarrelsome, snatched away quite a bit of land from another neighbour by raising a fence. He then brought a relative of his from another village, and gave it to him to cultivate. When this became known, those who had been deprived did not dare to fight back; and there was bitterness and hostility where there had been unity and co-operation. And all this happened when none of them owned the land; the land still belonged to the school which continued to pay the zemindar's rent from its own coffers.

A new situation thus arose. But what was the answer? How could co-operation of several years ago be restored once more? At this stage, let me point out that another development had taken place in the meanwhile. The *sons* of these very labourers had been educated in the school; and in their own way they had become familiar with the ideas of Gandhiji. They knew that Gandhiji wanted men to unite not merely in war but in peace also.

They knew, or many of them had only heard, how the work of Khadi used to be carried on, and they had also come to believe in some kind of sharing with one another.

When the fathers became recalcitrant, an appeal was therefore made by the teachers to the younger generation. It was said to them in a meeting of both the fathers and the sons that the teachers or political workers were going to do nothing; they had to do it all by themselves. If the fathers had to surrender their selfish rights, the pressure must come from their sons, not from outside.

There was of course a long series of discussion between fathers and sons; everything was done openly in the small community. And eventually all the land has come back to the school, and it is now the present batch of students who cultivate it, with the assistance of those who want to help. But such work is naturally arduous, and the children are not good in gardening work. Yet, even though production has gone down, the boys continue to work on the land after their classes, in the hope that this will be good education and good play for them.

My personal experience in the Gandhian type of constructive work has thus been varied, sometimes interrupted, but intensely rewarding. I have felt that it is possible by intelligence and organization to meet some of our more urgent needs in the villages through the villagers' own labours. Gandhian constructive work does not exhaust itself with the spinning-wheel. That can be made a starting point, and then work can be extended to hygiene, composting, education, recreation and a dozen other things. The second thing which I have learnt is that the unity of war does not necessarily bring about the unity of peace. Joint effort in peace-time construction, in sharing with one's neighbours the fruits of one's own labours, does not automatically arise when a battle has been won. It has to be secured independently, probably after a larger amount of toilsome education.

If again, peace-time co-operation is *forced* upon a people, either through the action of an active party, or, maybe, by means of Law, there still remains a hurdle where all of this can break down. That is the level of inter-personal relationships where the good done by the Party or the State can break down if adequate educative effort and organization is not continued for that specific purpose.

These are indeed hard lessons. But I do not know if there can be an answer to the human problems discussed except through intense constructive work carried out with intelligence, determination and long-drawn patience.

II

In the previous lecture I confessed that political activities were far less interesting to me than constructive work of the kind which came under the Gandhian programme. I had felt drawn by the concern which Gandhiji felt for the lowliest, and particularly for their freedom from all forms of exploitation. The deep influence which I had experienced after reading Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell and Bernard Shaw had led me towards philosophical anarchism; and this was echoed in the writings of Gandhiji as well. I had certainly noted that the foundation of the latter's philosophy lay in his faith in God; but this had hardly any attraction for me. Yet I found that one could subscribe to his ideas and associate oneself with his programme of work without any injury to one's inward commitments. And thus I continued to remain a Gandhian, of course, in my own way.

In one respect, Gandhiji however remained unique. It was easy for me to subscribe to his view that if a man was prepared to hold fast to what he held to be right, he could never be enslaved. One could easily be fortified in this belief by the examples of Socrates or Galileo, and certainly of the numerous pioneers of faith who had been born in every land in course of man's long history. I realized

that what was original in Gandhiji was that he wanted to convert this into an instrument, not merely of personal action, but of collective action as well. This was indeed a brave new experiment; and in this I felt intellectually as well as emotionally drawn rather forcefully.

I had no direct experience of the organization of violence. But from what I observed all round, I shared with Gandhiji the belief that violence led to the concentration of power in a few hands instead of its diffusion. Even the brief experience which I had gained roughly from 1920 to the year 1936, had made me feel that the party system, as it operated in India, led to a concentration of power in a few hands; and it was in consequence of an unhappy experience of that kind that I actually tendered my resignation from the ordinary membership of the Indian National Congress in 1936; rather than merely allow it to lapse in course of time.

In any case, this is not of great material consequence. Only, I continued to be more firmly committed to what I understood to be Gandhiji's economic and political theories, when I discovered that the Congress gave greater importance to bringing about an end of British rule in India rather than in simultaneously building up the non-violent power of the masses from below. The faith of those leaders of the Congress with whom I personally came in contact, and whose labours I also shared, seemed to lie in the view that the masses *had continuously to be led*, at least for some time to come. And this opinion was confined, not to Congressmen alone, but also to many of my friends who had drunk deeply in Marxian literature. The State and its capture were more important for Marxian and non-Marxian alike, even if it were of a temporary nature.

This might indeed have been true. But I felt that I could hardly be of any use to men of that faith. And so I retired with renewed faith in the need of an experiment in the organization of non-violence on a massive scale. And

even in this regard, the intellectual part of the work seemed more attractive for me than constructive work in which I had laboured, with interruptions, from 1930 to 1936. For what gave me added justification for such work was what I had witnessed among a fairly large number of Gandhian workers, both in Bengal and elsewhere. They seemed to be swayed by faith and obedience, sometimes even by unquestioning or blind faith in a manner which, I thought, was good for no man. The fear was that such unquestioning obedience, when Work was worshipped more than Thought which should inform it, (and also be the result of Work,) would eventually lead men into the dead sands of Routine. Instead of it, there should be freedom and creativeness even if it were in the matter of following Gandhiji.

I have tried to explain at some length my attitude towards Gandhiji and Gandhism, because this was not only my justification for withdrawing from political activity, but because it gave me an added reason for dedication to my own work in anthropology. There, my principal concern had become the phenomenon of culture change; and whatever I did or tried to do in that line was to give a new meaning to my own commitment as a social worker. Even the study of Gandhism became for me an experimental study in one of the methods of social change. In other words, it gave a new dimension to my pursuit of the Gandhian way.

But let me now continue the story. After I left the Congress, I came back eventually to the University of Calcutta after an interval of eight years, in 1938. The work in Bolpur continued, and I remained associated with it, though less actively than before. My interest in Gandhism became deepened, and I found myself able to write numerous articles and a few books on that subject. The majority of them were, of course, in Bengali. Then came the Quit-India Movement in 1942. And when the fateful resolution was passed in August 1942, I found

myself once more landed in gaol with many of my old, and a considerable number of new comrades.

The detention ended in 1945 after the Second World War was over. In the meanwhile, i.e. between 1930 and 1941, there were two or three occasions when I gained an intimate contact with either Gandhiji himself, or some of his close associates like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan or Khurshedbehn Naoroji, the grand-daughter of Dadabhai Naoroji. When I was released from detention and took up my work once more in the University, we heard that Gandhiji had decided to come to Midnapore in order to meet the workers who had carried on non-violent resistance all through the years 1942 to 1945. Midnapore had been subjected to heavy repression, while a terrible cyclone had also swept over the land in October 1942. Yet the will of the resisters had remained unbroken.

About this time, a letter came to me from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur stating that Gandhiji desired me to see him immediately after his arrival in Bengal. The story of this interview has been related in *My Days with Gandhi*, and need not therefore be re-told here. I did meet Gandhiji before he left for Midnapore, and then for Assam and Madras; but I did not join his company, although that is what he had desired.

In any case, the year 1945 passed by. Then came 1946, when serious communal riots broke out in Calcutta in the month of August. During these riots, some of my friends who had no political interests or commitments, began to run a rescue service for both Hindus and Muslims. Stranded families were gathered in private cars and then reached to safe places with their relatives or friends in other parts of the town. Much of this brave rescue work was done by excellent social workers, quite a few of whom had not received high education. But those amongst us who were Gandhians felt more and more helpless, as we could not even prevent the slaughter of people when it took place almost in our presence. In sheer fright and in self-defence,

the Hindu population of Calcutta hit back, when the Muslim League government celebrated its Direct Action Day. Perhaps the same kind of fear was also operating on the other side.

Our hearts became sick with what we witnessed as we either walked or drove through the streets. Dead bodies lay in a bloated condition on the deserted roads, the doors and windows of homes remained tightly closed to shut off the stench which arose, and the roofs of houses became the refuge of numberless vultures who were at their unbounded feast. Days passed by, the riots continued, and some of us Gandhians began to feel that we were hardly capable of dealing with the situation in a non-violent way. The crisis was too deep; and inwardly at least I felt that we had failed. The field had been left open for those who believed in striking back. In other words, violence apparently seemed to have scored over our faith, when it came to doing something effective.

When we were in this state of mind, when we could do nothing more than carry on relief operations as best we could, the newspapers reported one day that severe riots had broken out in Noakhali in East Bengal. Within a few days, Satish Babu of the Khadi Pratisthan sent us word that our services were needed immediately. Gandhiji had asked him to send a batch of satyagrahis at once to Noakhali in order to ascertain what had actually taken place there. They were to see things with their own eyes, come back if they could, and report. And so a batch of over two dozen satyagrahis left soon after for the scene of devastation. In the meanwhile, we heard that the President of the Congress, Acharya J. B. Kripalani and his wife, Sucheta Devi, had already proceeded there.

Gandhiji arrived in Calcutta on the 29th of October, 1946, and I was placed in his service along with some of my closest friends. The task assigned to me was of a light character. I was to go through the newspaper reports of

speeches by Muslim leaders, and note any direct incitements to violence in them. I was also to prepare a description of the economic situation in Noakhali District. When this was ready, I reported the findings to Gandhiji; and when he left for Noakhali on the 6th of November, 1946, I was among those who accompanied him in the train.

In a few weeks' time, we settled down in the village of Srirampur in Noakhali, and from then onwards, I had a singularly favourable opportunity of serving Gandhiji along with a stenographer volunteer, named Parasuram, and thus also of observing how he worked.

In those days, Gandhiji appeared to be sometimes in a tense, and sometimes also in a relaxed mood. On a few occasions, he was overcome by frustration, and even gave vent to expressions of anger; and he could be terribly angry at times. But what struck me much more was that, immediately after any event like this, he would close his eyes, clench his fingers, and after a little while completely recover his poise and equanimity.

It is interesting that one day he asked me a rather unusual question. He demanded that, now I had worked with him at very close quarters, I must tell him exactly what I felt about him. I did so truthfully; but this leads me to another event when I had met him on his way to Midnapore in Calcutta, a few months ago. On that occasion, we had a talk about my book entitled *Selections from Gandhi*. His complaint against it was that I had created in it a picture of him, better than what it really was. His writings showed him at his best. They presented a picture of his aspirations, and not of his achievements. I had argued back on that occasion that, we had learnt from the Poet Rabindranath's writings that a man should be judged by the best moments of life, by his loftiest creations, rather than by the smallnesses of everyday life. Gandhiji's reply had been as follows:

Yes, that is true of the Poet; for he has to bring down the light of the stars upon the earth. But for men like me, you have to measure them, not by the rare moments of greatness in their lives, but by the amount of dust which they collect on their feet in course of life's journey.

This had been one of those moments when I realized, what great heights Gandhiji could attain. But as I lived close to him, and was privileged to observe him in small acts as well as in acts of greatness, the picture that I had in mind about him became modified in detail, considerably enlarged, and richer on that account.

As Gandhiji went from village to village, and met scores and scores of people every day, it appeared to me that he took infinite pains in order to ascertain what had actually happened. He seemed never to be satisfied with details, and would himself, or through an interpreter, examine the correctness of any report until he was fully satisfied. Otherwise, he would not act upon that report at all.

On the evening before his departure from Delhi for Noakhali on the 28th of October, 1946, he had said in course of his after-prayer speech that the "sufferings of women had melted his heart. He wanted to go to Bengal and wipe their tears and put heart in them, if he could". I remember that on one occasion in Noakhali, a number of women came to see him, and they had lost their nearest and dearest ones during the riots. They came and took the dust of his feet in obeisance, and prayed for a few words of consolation from him. Gandhiji's face hardened, and he said that they must recover their courage. He had come to Bengal not to bring consolation, but courage, without which a new life would never be born.

Noakhali is a district in which, before the riots of 1946, there were 18 per cent of Hindus in the population, while the rest were Muslims. And the Hindus owned three-fourths of the property, while the rest was owned by the Muslims. Gandhiji was aware of all this, and was also

aware of the grievous suffering to which the Hindus had been subjected, how their homes had been looted and burnt, and how those who really counted among the Hindus had been brutally done to death. Yet, when he met those who came to see him, he asked them if they had been educated with the money derived from the farmers and artisans. He was glad that they had become engineers, doctors or schoolmasters; but now it was their duty to bring their talents to the service of those, on whose labours, their prosperity was built. The engineer should come and help in building better houses, better roads, so that the villagers can make their homes cleaner and more beautiful. The doctor should likewise teach people how to secure clean drinking water, how to make the village clean, how to secure balanced food, and how also to prevent disease. And it is only thus that they could repay the debt which they owed to the villagers.

Months thus rolled by, and eventually in March 1947, Gandhiji felt that duty called him to Bihar, from where complaints came that the rehabilitation of the Muslim sufferers was not being effectively carried out by the Congress Government. And so he left Noakhali and proceeded towards Patna on the 2nd of March, 1947.

While the time of departure came, some of the volunteers asked Gandhiji how long they should stay at their appointed task in Noakhali. Gandhiji's reply was, "As long as you are alive!" And it must be said to the credit of these volunteers that they have all remained at their posts, sometimes in gaol, sometimes out of it, while a few have even lost their lives, but never desired to forsake the duty which had been entrusted to them.

In Bihar, Gandhiji toured from village to village and spread the same lesson that he had courageously imparted to the people of Noakhali. But new developments began to take place, one of which was at the personal level and the other in the political firmament of India. The personal

happenings need not be recounted here, except for one aspect of it which had a wider significance.

Gandhiji developed sharp differences with some of his most intimate co-workers over the question of his relationship with women workers who ever came close to him. Some of the former were rather uncharitable in their criticism, and this left him in a lonely frame of mind. I was personally not interested in this aspect of his life, namely, his experiments in *brahmacharya*. But once he invited my opinion, particularly after his difference on this question had become widened between him and some of his co-workers in Wardha and Ahmedabad. I said what I exactly felt, but added at the same time that he showed personal preferences, and also dislikes, which proved that he did not perhaps treat everyone with equal objectivity.

It was at this point that something else also occurred which confirmed the opinion that I had expressed about his likes and dislikes about particular persons. Personally I had been deeply interested in the radical aspects of Gandhiji's economic and political philosophy. I knew that he had progressed from one position to another, and, in the later stages, he had even contradicted what he had said or written earlier. Yet, the core of his beliefs was sufficiently clear and radical; and this was what I tried to emphasize in my own writings, as well as in my political discussions with him.

Thus in a conversation he had expressed the view in regard to his theory of trusteeship that the true heir of a trustee should be the public. On another occasion he had also said that a capitalistic system could only be built up by violence and could also be defended by violence alone. If a community wanted to defend its gains by non-violence, it must first of all get rid of all 'ill-gotten gains'. Even with regard to caste, he had begun to say that, although he had held other views in the past, he had now begun to believe in Noakhali, that it was a necessary piece of social reform.

In one evening's speech he went further to say that marriage between men and women of different faiths was a desirable piece of reform; for after all religion was a personal affair and should not be allowed to interfere with social or political relationships.

While he was thus making many statements of a revolutionary nature, I requested him one day to prepare the English report of his own speeches for the Press, a task which was formerly done by me. Otherwise, the report of his speeches of such a revolutionary character, which I made in my own language might, later on, even be mistrusted. This practice went on for some months until we came to Bihar. Gradually, there was some reason for me to feel that this was disturbing to some of his most intimate colleagues in Sevagram and elsewhere. Maybe, I was wrong. But when this was coupled with my feeling that Gandhiji could be subject to strong personal likes and dislikes, I thought it was time for me to return to my work in the University. But when taking his leave, I assured Gandhiji that he would not have to call me for service while he came to Bengal, but if he needed my service elsewhere, he had only to send me a line on a postcard.

These are however such personal matters that I should not dwell upon them any more. But it was clearly my feeling in those critical days that Gandhiji was becoming more and more isolated from his closest co-workers, who had been by his side for years together, in regard to his personal life. And this became further accentuated when, in his political relationships also, he began to feel more and more lonely.

The days through which we were all passing were critical ones for India, and we watched every step that was taken in the negotiations between the Cabinet Delegation, on the one hand, and the Congress and Muslim League, on the other. Gandhiji remained in Bihar for some time and then went to Delhi. The communal situation in India rapidly deteriorated, while the experience of our

national leaders who had joined the Interim Government became one of a disastrous nature. The Civil Services and the Army were infected by the communal virus, and were thus becoming more and more undependable. The political organization of the Congress had proved to be too weak in coping with the communal disturbances. So when the proposal came from the Viceroy of India that the Congress and the Muslim League should accept partition, so that each could at least have a dependable Civil Service and Army at its command, it appeared that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were agreeable to the proposal. The difficulty might arise if Gandhiji opposed. And it is reported in Allan Campbell-Johnson's book entitled *Mission with Mountbatten* that when this question was being discussed, Sardar said that he "considered that Gandhi would abide loyally by any decision taken," evidently by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress (p. 104).

In other words, Sardar knew how deeply committed Gandhiji was to the democratic organization of the Congress and how he assured complete freedom even to his closest associates to differ from him if they desired. This event must have happened in about the last week of April 1947. When Gandhiji realized what was going to happen, he made one last, but desperate attempt. He went to see the Viceroy, spoke to him, and while leaving for Bengal on the 8th of May 1947, he wrote a letter to the Viceroy from the railway train, which is reproduced below in part:

Dear Friend,

It strikes me that I should summarise what I said and wanted to say and left unfinished for want of time, at our last Sunday's meeting.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, it would be a blunder of first magnitude for the British to be party in any way whatsoever to the division of India. If it has to come, let it come after the British withdrawal, as a result of understanding between the parties or an

armed conflict which according to Quid-i-Azam Jinnah is taboo.

In other words, Gandhiji was thus taking a legalistic stand in order to prevent the partition, if he possibly could. While on the train, I had the privilege of reading a copy of this letter, and then had the following conversation with Gandhiji:

G. Mountbatten had the cheek to tell me, 'Mr. Gandhi, today the Congress is with me and no longer with you.'

B. But what did you say in reply?

G. I retorted, 'But India is still with me.'

But my complaint to him was that he had not made good that claim. Instead of it, in the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the 14-15th of June, 1947, Gandhiji had recommended to this supreme body that they should endorse the recommendation of the Working Committee in favour of partition.

A few months afterwards, when Gandhiji came to Bengal in the first fortnight of August, 1947, I was once more privileged to be with him. And, one day, while discussing the problem of partition, I raised a question before him. I said,

B. If we interpret your support of the Working Committee by saying that you did so in order to give protection to the leaders who had already decided to accept partition, would it be wholly wrong?

G. It may bear that interpretation, but it is not true. With whom was I going to carry on the fight? Don't you realize that, as a result of one year of communal riots, the people of India have all become communal? They can see nothing beyond the communal question. They are tired and frightened. The Congress has only represented this feeling of the whole nation. How can I then oppose it?

- B. If you felt that partition was wrong and would not solve the communal problem, why did you not try to alter the decision of the Congress? Would you allow a child to burn its hand in the fire and not restrain its freedom?
- G. I do not know. The future alone can say whether I was right or wrong in supporting the decision of the A.I.C.C. I felt that the situation was not ripe for my opposition.
- B. Could you not have *created* a situation? You have done so on many an occasion. Even in the A.I.C.C., as well as in the country as a whole, you knew that there were many who were completely unhappy at the partition. Could you not rally that force?

Gandhiji's answer to my question was one of the most surprising that I ever heard from him. He said,

- G. I have never created a situation in my life. I have one qualification which many of you do not possess. I can almost instinctively feel what is stirring in the heart of the masses. And when I feel that the forces of good are dimly stirring within, I depend upon them and build up a programme. And they respond. People say that I had created a situation; but I had done nothing except for giving a shape to what was already there. Today I see no sign of such a healthy feeling. And therefore I shall have to wait until the time comes.
- B. But how long will that be?
- G. Perhaps it will be three months or perhaps four, when the people will begin to realize that the independence which has come falls short of Swaraj. It is only then that I shall have to think anew.

It was thus that independence came to India on the 15th of August, 1947. It was indeed a great day when there was widespread rejoicing; and yet Gandhiji said to a number of young men who had come to meet him that this

celebration 'was a sorry affair'! These were his exact words. And so in Calcutta, he went on working day by day in his mission of healing; until one day I asked him again: Now that partition has come, what should we do? His answer was that our task was to educate and organize the villagers into a consciousness of their new Constitutional rights and duties.

When I asked him again,

B. Supposing India works for the freedom of the masses in this manner, what should be our attitude towards Pakistan?

G. If real work for building up Swaraj is carried on in India, then in course of time it will have its influence upon the masses of Pakistan.

I asked him, "But what about our political relations with Pakistan?" His answer was,

If they remain happy with their sovereignty, let them be. What is of much greater importance is that we shall all have to work for the freedom of all the seven and a half lacs of villages.

In other words, he was, even after partition, not drawing a distinction between the 5½ lac villages in India and the 2 lacs in Pakistan. And then he proceeded to say,

G. Perhaps my work will be in Pakistan. How many of you will go with me?

I had a hunch that his work was to lie in West rather than in East Pakistan, for the Pathans of the N.W.F. Province, who had worked devotedly for the Gandhian ideal, had been let down by their comrades in the Indian National Congress. And in answer to his question, I said to him,

B. Bapu, it is not for you to ask us who should go and who should not go. It is for you to name those whom you want.

And this is how we realized the thoughts which were stirring within Gandhiji's mind during the fateful days when independence came.

We heard rumours that Gandhiji had actually suggested to the members of the Working Committee on the verge of their acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan of partition, that they should rather withdraw and prepare for a final massive struggle of civil disobedience. We had also heard that the courage of the leaders had failed because the cost in civil strife might turn out to be too heavy, and perhaps the final results also uncertain. Therefore they thought it wiser to accept partition and make the best use of whatever power was given to them to build up a new India.

Indeed, Michael Brecher, in his book called *Nehru: A Political Biography*, has quoted a speech indicating that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was compelled to accept partition as the lesser evil, as otherwise India would become involved in a civil war "which would have checked the progress of India for a long time to come". (p. 376)

This is also borne out by a speech which the Congress President, Acharya J. B. Kripalani made when he tendered his resignation before the A.I.C.C. in its meeting of 15-17 June 1949. In course of that speech, Kripalaniji said:

The situation in the country had rapidly deteriorated. The Interim Coalition Government was neither a true coalition nor a proper Government. The Muslim League bloc was avowedly hostile and the Viceroy who still wielded supreme power was there to play off one party against the other. The Congress leaders in the Government realized too late that they had played into the hands of the Viceroy in agreeing to take the Muslim League into the Government without adequate and explicit guarantees of co-operation. Riots had broken out in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar and later in the Punjab and the Frontier as a result of the cult of hate and violence preached by the Muslim League. The Provincial Governments were unable to cope with the riots and the Central Government was told by the Viceroy that it could not intervene. The situation was intolerable.

The British Government's Plan of June 3rd seemed to open a way out of this tangle of chaos and frustration. Though the price

demanded was the partition of India, the Congress agreed to pay the price in the hope that the Muslim League, having got what it wanted, would cease its hymn of communal hate, and the two dominions, freed from the incubus of foreign rule, would be able to turn their resources and their energy to the reconstruction of the social and economic structures of the two States. The other alternative before us was to withdraw from the Interim Government and rally the nation for a final non-violent battle against the combination of the British and the Muslim League. This was what Gandhiji would have liked us to do, but the Congress leadership found the prospect of an immediate and peaceful transfer of power too tempting and chose the first alternative. Gandhiji himself, knowing that the Working Committee had acted in good faith and international complications would be involved in reversing the Working Committee's action advised you to endorse their decision to accept the June 3rd Plan.*

It has sometimes been said that Gandhiji acquiesced with the decision because, in the alternative, he would have had to be at the helm of affairs and build up a new leadership within the Congress. To both Shri Krishna Kripalani† and Sri Amritlal Chattreji, he had reportedly said that, if he were twenty years younger, he would have perhaps done so. But to my mind, this is not wholly true; other ideas were also floating in his mind. Gandhiji rather felt that the time was not ripe, and he wanted to wait a little longer before formulating any fresh plan of action. We shall see this a little later.

We thus observe how partition and the independence of India came to us at a moment of weakness, instead of in a moment of strength. And when independence came, the whole country was torn by a recrudescence of communal violence both in the west in Punjab and the east in

**Congress Bulletin*, No. 6. 31 December 1947. I have heard from Acharya Kripalani that this speech of his was very carefully revised by Gandhiji himself.

†See K. R. Kripalani: *Gandhi: A Life*, 1968, p. 179.

Bengal. It is estimated that half a million lives were lost, while the dislocation of life and economy which occurred was of an unprecedented nature in the history of our land.

The violence which broke out was also beyond comparison, and all our previous exercises in non-violence became quenched like an insignificant lamp before the storm of human brutality.

It was at such a juncture that a Negro leading intellectual of America, Professor Stuart Nelson of the Howard University, came to see Gandhiji and asked him how it was that non-violence seemed to have failed today even while it had apparently succeeded in the political struggle.

Gandhiji replied that it had become clear to him that what he had mistaken for satyagraha was not more than passive resistance, which was a weapon of the weak. Indians harboured ill-will and anger against their erstwhile rulers, while they pretended to resist them non-violently. . . .

Now that the latter were voluntarily quitting India, our apparent non-violence was going to pieces in a moment. The attitude of violence which we had secretly harboured, in spite of the restraint imposed by the Indian National Congress, now recoiled upon us and made us fly at each other's throat when the question of the distribution of power came up. . . .

Gandhiji then proceeded to say that it was indeed true that many English friends had warned him that the so-called non-violence of India was no more than the passivity of the weak, it was not the non-violence of the stout in heart who disdained to surrender their sense of human unity even in the midst of a conflict of interests but continued their effort to convert the opponent instead of coercing him into submission.

Gandhiji proceeded to say that it was indeed true that he had all along laboured an illusion. But he was never sorry for it. He realized that if his vision had not been clouded by that illusion, India would never have reached the point which it had done today. (*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 270-71)

And it was thus that, even in the midst of defeat, Gandhiji made his God responsible, and laid all his victory

and the defeat at the feet of the Master whom he had zealously served all his life.

9

THE REVOLUTIONARY METHODS OF MARX AND GANDHIJI*

At least one thing has happened during the Gandhi Centenary year. There is in evidence a widespread desire to re-assess the value of Gandhiji's economic and political ideas in the context of contemporary problems. This is true as much of those who claim to be Socialists, or of the Left, as of those who belong to the Nationalist camp, or the Right. There is, however, a question of method involved in this re-examination. One can either compare theory with theory, or practice with practice, but perhaps it would be unfair, and even illogical, to compare, say, the Marxian theory of revolution with the Gandhian practice. If we keep this caution in mind, we shall probably be able to compare, with a greater degree of fairness, the essentials of both the theories and practices to which Gandhiji and Marx subscribed.

During several decades from 1920 onwards, Gandhiji was described by Leftists, sometimes as a Hindu revivalist, sometimes as a playboy of the Indian bourgeoisie; his theory of trusteeship was described as a retrogressive step, intended to perpetuate private ownership of the means of production; while his non-violence is said to have been designed in order to sabotage the revolutionary fervour of the masses as their temper rose in rebellion. Similar observations have also been made, but perhaps with less pungency against the practice of Communism in India. Some of the endeavours of the Communists have been described as the product of romantic revolutionism, which arose, not

*Address at Symposium on Gandhiji's Contribution to Social Sciences, Ranchi University, on 28 September 1969.

out of a recognition of the objective conditions prevailing in India, but out of a commitment to ideals and methods, derived chiefly from books. Communists have also been occasionally condemned as opportunists, working under the belief that the 'end justifies the means' or that 'nothing succeeds like success'. So they overlook the cost which, say, Russia has had to pay through purges or the liquidation of a large number of the most prominent figures of the Russian revolution itself.

It will not be our purpose in the present paper either to defend or to condemn; but we shall try to describe instead the broad objective conditions under which both Marxism and Gandhism have actually operated during the last fifty years or so; and the modifications which both of them were subjected to in course of an adaptation to varying historical conditions. Undoubtedly this is a difficult task; but we believe no harm will be done if a preliminary attempt is made to secure an overall view; for this might give us leads in future towards more intensive historical studies. But that responsibility will perhaps lie with those who have the time and inclination to apply themselves to such an arduous task.

In outline, the Marxian theory of revolution is as follows. At each step of human history in which a revolutionary change has taken place in the mode of production, power has also been transferred from one class to another. There have been class-wars, which may or may not have been accompanied by violence and bloodshed. Even if there were violent conflicts, these conflicts opened up new lines of human advancement. What is important is not the suffering, but the creation of new objective conditions under which production increased, and progressively the toilers gained access to more and more power.

The Industrial Revolution has given rise to conditions which will create the stage in which the workers of the world will unite, and overthrow the forces which not only keep them in bondage, but also put a brake upon the

limitless possibilities of increased production which the growth of science and technology has made possible for man. At every stage, however, the old order made concessions to the working classes, so as to take the edge off their revolt, and thus perpetuate the rule of the upper classes. But this only delayed the revolution, by weakening the class-war which ceaselessly goes on within human society.

The task of the revolutionist is to unmask this hidden conflict; bring it to the surface, and help in bringing about the revolution much more quickly than under natural conditions. By thus telescoping the process of revolution the revolutionist actually reduces the total amount of suffering to which humanity is subject. Momentary suffering in a revolution is therefore a smaller price which the world is called upon to pay for ushering in an age of increased production and greater freedom for labouring mankind than if one tried to delay the conflict for fear of violence.

There are many more facets of the Marxian theory of revolution which every reader will recognize as having been left out in the outline presented above. But, in spite of its extreme brevity, we believe, the outline does not do any grave injustice to the Marxian theory of revolution. What is however of greater importance is to find out how this theory has actually worked itself out in practice.

When the Bolshevik Party captured power from the Mensheviks in Russia, Russia was predominantly a 'backward' country, in which industrial growth had been of a far lower order than, say, in England or Germany. The historical circumstances which emerged at the end of the First World War presented to Lenin an opportunity which he used to the very best advantage. The story of how the Bolsheviks came into power, how the forces of production were remodelled, sometimes by a step forward, sometimes by a partial retreat, need not be recounted here. These are written in letters of gold in the pages of history.

But one thing happened which had not been anticipated before. Lenin gave an importance to the role played

by the Party which had not been foreseen by Marx. The Party became the spearhead of the revolution, and led the working classes in its successful accomplishment. The innumerable peasants, or even Party members, who did not fall in line with the Party's ideas were liquidated in the interest of the revolution. The price thus paid in human suffering and by the suppression of free criticism was considered to be inevitable.

Later on, when the Second World War broke out, Russia under Stalin behaved more like a Nation-State of the orthodox kind than a State which was socialistic. Thus for the sake of national survival, as well as for the sake of releasing the forces of production, the backward land of Russia had to be placed under a dictatorship, which was not so much the dictatorship of the proletariat as of a party speaking on behalf of the proletariat, and finally of a hard core of leaders who led the party in the direction which they decided was best under the circumstances.

Those who did not see eye to eye with this hard-core leadership were liquidated, as we have said already. Trotsky with his theory of permanent revolution may be taken as one and perhaps the chief of these examples. We need not name others, for it would serve no useful purpose. What is however important is that Russia, in order to raise herself from the mire, had to yield to the demands of a kind of nationalism. And so did China in more recent times. The question of national territorial boundaries has indeed become so important in the case of these two countries, in the neighbourhood of the Usuri and of the Dzungarian Gateway, that the two socialist countries do not behave towards one another in any manner which is different from that in which any other Nation-State would have behaved under similar conditions.

This lapse into nationalism, in our opinion, was not caused by any weakness in the Marxian theory of revolution. The real cause lay in the constraints of poverty and political and economic backwardness from which the

Communist parties of both Russia and China have been trying to lift the millions of their working people. Nationalism seems to play a 'progressive' role in those countries even now. The idea of the Fatherland and its glory seem to evoke sentiments which are stronger for the time being than a call to work for Permanent Revolution, or the liberation of the working classes irrespective of their national origin.

Czechoslovakia presents a different picture. And so does Yugoslavia. Both are small countries compared to Russia and China. Perhaps they find today that, with their increasing manufactures, they can hardly remain tied up with socialist countries alone for their external trade. Cuba, we understand, still fosters sugarcane plantations belonging to American capitalists; although restrictions of many kinds have been imposed upon the latter. But what is important is that situations in the modern world have been forcing one socialist country after another to modify their steps to a greater extent than was ever anticipated before. Many of those who have thus departed from their original plans of revolution have been condemned by some of their comrades, who are probably operating under more favourable circumstances, as Revisionists, Deviationists or Romantic Revolutionists, and so on. And these events can be traced back to the days of Lenin who condemned some of these 'infantile' adventures in revolutionism as retrogressive steps.

If the above sweeping generalization regarding the actual practice of Communism is not wholly wrong, and if we can justify them by a reference to the compulsions or limitations under which Communism has had to operate in many countries, then should we not also exercise the same measure of historical objectivity in trying to analyse and describe the fate which the Gandhian theory of revolution has undergone in India? Personally, I think we should.

And what is the Gandhian theory? Gandhiji held very firmly to the view that the future world of humanity should consist of those who contributed by their body labour to the service of society. Like Tolstoy or Proudhon he was of opinion that those who lived on the toils of others were thieves. But how was the change to be brought about from an exploitative society to one in which every decent human being had stepped down from the backs of others?

Tolstoy held that each man should order his life wholly according to the teachings of Christ. If he followed the true Christian way, he should not bother about the State or other institutions which men had built up throughout the course of history in order to perpetuate slavery. He should follow the Christian rule: 'Resist not evil'; and by ordering his life in a completely moral way, he should allow the Evil to die like dead leaves in autumn.

However much Gandhiji may have admired Tolstoy, it was at this point that he showed a remarkable departure. Gandhiji believed in institutions; and he also held that he could not wait until a sufficiently large number of men and women had started re-ordering their lives in terms of a new morality. Men had to begin to resist evil individually and collectively, by means of progressive non-co-operation. He even said that the war must be carried into the enemy's camp. But all this should be by non-violent means alone.

War has been defined by one authority as the means of imposing the will of one party over another by means of punishment. One has then to look upon other human beings, or a community, as consisting of enemies only. This, Gandhiji stubbornly refused to do. He refused to betray, even under the gravest of provocations, his fundamental belief that all human beings were brothers. If some erred, as they undoubtedly did by exploiting the labours of others, then what had to be done was to non-co-operate with the immoral institutions, and by a heroic resistance born out of love, try to persuade the exploiters to shed their dependence on exploitation, and eventually co-operate with

the satyagrahis in order to bring about an end of the institution which they had inherited from the past and which they had been upholding so long for private advantage. It did not matter whether the institution was capitalism or something like the empire which the British had built up in India. But when the satyagrahi resisted, his purpose should be to redeem the capitalist and the member of the ruling class by converting him into a voluntary labourer who would eventually subserve the interests of the toiling masses, and function as a guardian of their freedom.

How did Gandhiji try to work out his theory of non-violent revolution in order to build up an exploitation-free society in actual practice in India? He might have started with a small band of people trying to be perfect or near-perfect by diligent personal endeavour. But then he would have ended by founding another religious sect in India, which would have added one more to the hundreds that already exist. He chose a different way.

Gandhiji, of course, drew to himself a small number of companions of similar profession, in whose company he lived in either Sabarmati or Sevagram. And with their help he also tried to build up the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Village Industries Association, All India Spinners' Association, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Go-Seva Sangh and the like. The 'constructive workers' were expected to help in building up village life in India in a new way altogether. Politics was not for them, unless they felt the irresistible call in moments of grave national crises.

Gandhiji's main political work, however, lay through the Congress. When he practically took over the command of the Congress, he did not merely rely on constitutional means of agitation but added to them direct action of a non-violent character. Thus, he succeeded in converting the Congress into a 'mass' organization dedicated to action. Liberals left the Congress; revolutionists believed that non-violence was too tame an affair for them; others felt that non-violence was intended to scotch the revolutionary urge

of the masses; and so each group left in order to follow their specific and independent programmes. Yet Gandhiji persisted in recommending progressive steps in non-violent non-co-operation from 1921 to 1942. The amazing response and heroism which the masses often exhibited, drew to his camp once more nationalist, socialist and revolutionary alike.

Many complained that his condemnation of violence was wrong. For the spontaneous violence of the populace was nothing in comparison with the organized, scientific, and large-scale violence of those who lived upon their toils. Gandhiji did not deny this, and also felt sympathy for the spontaneous violence of suppressed people. But were we also to *organize* it, or were we to organize in the non-violent way? This was the question. And Gandhiji's firm answer was that any organization of violent resistance would eventually end by bringing power into the hands of the few instead of the many. Violence, he held, inevitably tends towards the concentration of power, and leads eventually to dictatorship. In contrast, power to resist in a just cause can be universally shared by the masses only if the resistance is in terms of non-violence. And it was according to this theory that he slowly, patiently and persistently tried to lead the Congress in its struggle for political freedom through non-violent means.

But the Congress suffered from its own limitations. It welcomed Gandhiji's leadership of the national mass movement of liberation; tried to follow the rules of the game as best it could. But when it came to the more fundamental questions of political or economic reorganization, it temporarily parted company with him.

Thus when Gandhiji recommended labour-franchise in the Congress, this was found to be 'impractical'. His recommendation that franchise should begin at, say, 21 *and end* when a man attained, say, 50 years of age, fell upon deaf ears. When he recommended during the Second World War that India should make up its mind not to depend upon

violence for self-defence in future, it was once more found to be completely unacceptable.

Gandhiji's idea was that our economy must also be based on non-exploitation; for anything gained by violence, like capitalism could not be defended by non-violence. The Congress President said in answer to Gandhiji's demands that the Congress was 'not an organization for securing world peace'; it was wedded to the task of winning political freedom for India alone.

When again in 1939 he suggested to the National Planning Committee that it should find work for every able-bodied man, depend upon internal resources alone for economic development, this advice too was left aside.

When freedom came, Gandhiji recommended that the Congress should dissolve itself and, by means of a pyramidal system of panchayats, build up democracy from the base, the Constituent Assembly accepted adult franchise, on his insistence, but made the whole country more and more dependent on the Administration for bringing about a socialistic pattern of life in India, rather than build up democracy from grass-roots in accordance with the Gandhian plan.

In all these matters, Gandhiji worked at his own ideal, trying to introduce as much of it as was found acceptable by his comrades. To judge Gandhian ideals by how much of it was incorporated by the Congress is to overlook the conditions prevailing in India from time to time.

Personally, I would suggest that Gandhiji's ideals and their execution should be studied carefully and objectively under the constraints of a society which had not even become welded into a 'Nation' by common endeavour to win freedom, or by the effort to build up a New Life through the twin programmes of constructive work and non-violent non-co-operation. And then we shall be able to appreciate the deviations which have taken place in the modern world in Gandhism as well as in Marxism. Perhaps

such an understanding will later on open the way to a more efficient and fruitful execution of whichever ideal we may subscribe to.

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